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ISSUE 206 MAY 2009



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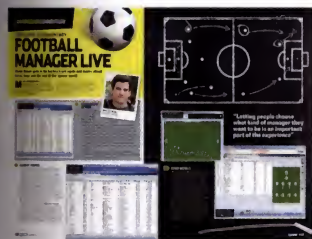
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PCZONE

58 EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR

Grab your musket and head to the high seas, in the return of the strategy series



108

DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

Find out how *Football Manager* was turned into an MMO



50

COVER STORY

WOLFENSTEIN

An in-depth look at this year's best kill-a-Nazi game!

WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



50 WOLFENSTEIN

Too busy? *PC ZONE* in 78 words...

You see that guy with the massive lightning skull on the cover? This issue is dedicated to him. He's a screaming, despoiled Nazi hellfiend from *Wolfenstein* and you can learn all about him in our exclusive hands-on. Elsewhere you'll find our *Empire: Total War* review. If you go even further, you'll find reviews of *Burnout Paradise*, and *The Godfather II*. Keep on reading and you'll soon fly off the end of the magazine! So watch out for that.



SCORING SCORES

HOW IMPORTANT IS a review score to you, and does it affect your decision to buy a game? According to a gaggle of developers who took part in one of the panels at DICE Summit (that's "Design, Innovate, Communicate, Entertain" – an annual pow-wow of videogame execs), review scores don't affect sales. So that's us out of a job then. And it means you won't be interested in our verdict on *Empire: Total War* or what we thought about *The Godfather II*!

Luckily, there's a stack of other stuff, but personally I'm excited about *Prototype* (page 38). Those of you who read my front of mag words last month will know I was looking for a commuter shooter and this is it! Now all I need are some claw-hands.

Anyway, we hope you enjoy this issue, our cover's pretty cool we're sure you'll agree. I'm a big fan of glowing skull type things, and there's plenty more where that came from in coming months. I promise.

By the way, if you don't know yet, we're on Twitter. Head to twitter.com/pczone to join the gang. And sign up to Demi Moore's thread (as well as Stephen Fry's). Like Fry's, Demi's is right funny – although I'm not sure it's meant to be.

Ali Wood

Ali Wood,
Editor

ali.wood@futurenet.com

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See page 102



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CONTENTS

66

BURNOUT PARADISE

Get ready for the fastest online arcade racer you'll see on the PC this year

100

ONLINE ZONE
FIGHT CLUB!
ZONE CHAT!
RANTING!
BLOGS!



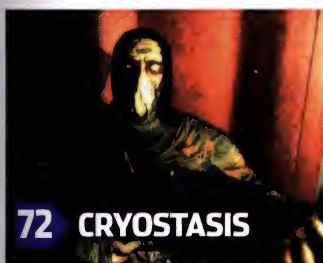
26 JUST CAUSE 2



32 NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT



70 GODFATHER II



72 CRYOSTASIS



78 LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE



44

THE HISTORY OF EVERQUEST

Take a look back at the life of the game that made the MMO genre.

CONTENTS

UPFRONT

- 14 OVERLORD II
- 16 SPECIAL REPORT
- 18 CHARTS
- 20 NEWS
- 22 HOT SHOTS: TROPICO 3
- 26 JUST CAUSE 2
- 28 FOOTBALL SUPERSTARS
- 32 NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT
- 34 BATTLEFIELD 1943: PACIFIC
- 36 PARADOX PROFILE
- 38 PROTOTYPE
- 40 NEW YORK COMIC CON
- 44 THE HISTORY OF EVERQUEST
- 50 WOLFENSTEIN

REVIEWS

- 58 EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR
- 66 BURNOUT PARADISE: THE ULTIMATE BOX
- 70 THE GODFATHER II
- 72 CRYOSTASIS
- 73 BATTLEFORGE
- 74 DRAKENSANG: THE DARK EYE
- 75 CEVILLE
- 76 CODENAME: PANZERS - COLD WAR
- 76 STEEL FURY - KHARKOV 1942
- 77 GRAND AGES: ROME
- 77 SHELLSHOCK 2: BLOOD TRAILS
- 78 STATE OF PLAY: LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE
- 80 BUDGET
- 82 BUYER'S GUIDE

HARDWARE

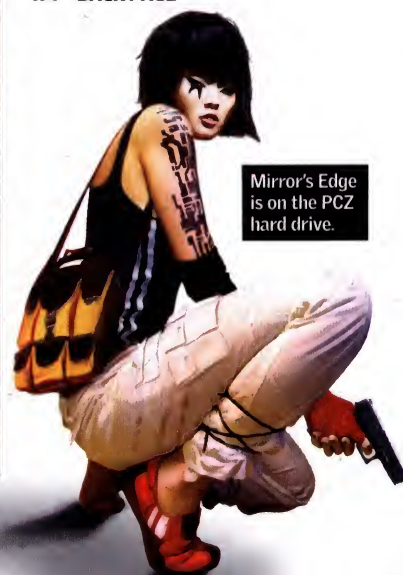
- 85 NEWS
- 86 REVIEWS
- 88 DEAR WANDY
- 90 HARDWARE BUYER'S GUIDE

FREEPLAY

- 92 NEWS
- 94 ON THE DVD
- 96 FREWARE
- 98 EXTEND
- 100 ONLINE ZONE

LOOKING BACK

- 104 RETRO ZONE
- 106 ON THE PCZ HARD DRIVE
- 108 DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY - FOOTBALL MANAGER LIVE
- 113 NEXT MONTH
- 114 BACK PAGE



Mirror's Edge is on the PCZ hard drive.

MEET THE TEAM

The team dedicated to bringing you gaming goodness

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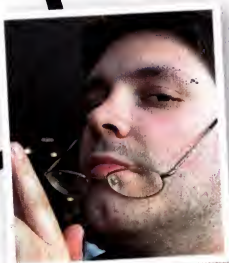
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Full offer details on page 102.



DAVID BROWN

Staff writer

AGE: 28

LIKES: Napoleon

DISLIKES: Wellington

FANCIES: Doughnuts

FAVOURITE GAME: *Monkey*

Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge

NOW PLAYING: *Empire:*

Total War

Testing *Empire* gave David a taste of imperial power. Like bad whiskey, the virtual authority and warfaring went straight to his head. Now he parades around the office in a silly hat, monologuing at passing colleagues and developers in order to intimidate them into providing support for his planned invasion of the advertising department. If this continues, David may be sent on a permanent press trip to Saint Helena.



RICHARD COSGROVE

Production editor

To increase David's and Steve's work rate Richard stands behind their chairs, whistling jauntily, bloodied power tools in his hands.

NOW PLAYING: *With sharp, sharp knives*

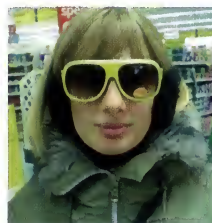


NICK BRAKESPEAR

Work experience (slave labour)

Nick arrived passionate to emulate *ZONE's* greatest writers. Twenty-four hours living in a dodgy hostel and transcribing interviews cured him of that delusion.

NOW PLAYING: *Mount&Blade*

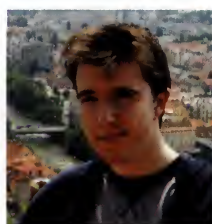


ALI WOOD

Editor

Despite resisting, *PC ZONE's* leader has become addicted to *LOVEFILM*. Watching the likes of *Wanted* and *There Will Be Blood* is taking valuable gaming time from her.

NOW PLAYING: *Mirror's Edge*



STEVE HOGARTY

Deputy editor

Despite being at New York Comic Con, Steve failed to bring back one comic or graphic novel. His shunning began immediately.

NOW PLAYING: *Left 4 Dead*
(by himself)

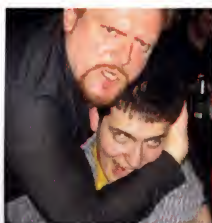


ADAM GLICK

Mysterious freelancer

Adam is refusing to tell us where he lives, so we pay him by leaving brown envelopes full of cash in lockers at Victoria Coach Station. If you know who Adam is, tell us.

NOW PLAYING: *Dawn of War II*



ED ZITRON

USA-resident freelancer

Ed has set up a soup kitchen in Wall Street. Feeding impoverished bankers while laughing at their misfortune has made Ed happier than he's been in years.

NOW PLAYING: *Saints Row 2*

WHAT'S HELPED THIS MONTH... A distinct lack of blizzards, and aeroplanes crossing the Pacific.
WHAT HASN'T HELPED THIS MONTH... Release dates slipping back further and further.

What we've been talking about...

HOGARTY'S LOVE LIFE 15mins Hogarty vanished for Valentine's weekend the same time Rhianna went into hiding. Coincidence?

WATCHMEN: THE MOVIE 33mins We know it'll be shite, but we're going to see it anyway.

WALLACE & GROMIT 23mins Will we ever get to see the game of the year?

FAT PEOPLE 27mins Returning from NYCC Steve regaled us with tales of amusingly obese Americans.

FOOTBALL, FOOTBALL Bloody hours Matt, David and James discussed how well other people kick balls.

LOST 49mins Steve covered his ears and hummed as Ali and Matt discussed the latest series...

HATING LOST 49mins ...while Richard muttered to himself about how *Battlestar Galactica* is the superior show.

STAR WHATEVER MMOS 4mins Ali and Richard got the upcoming *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* MMOs completely mixed up.

LOVEFILM.COM 63mins Another reason why the *PC ZONE* team are all shut-ins.

LEGAL LECTURES 12mins Was Richard joking when he said he enjoys attending lectures on copyright law?

WIN!



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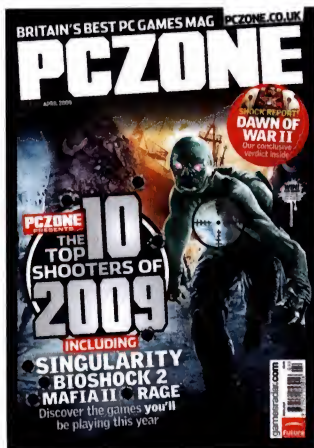
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LETTERS



Once more **Steve Hogarty** answers a happy, angry, and weird mailbag



KING OF LETTERS



Nude enough for you?

OF NIPPLES

What problem do games developers have with nipples?

For example: *Fallout 3*. The game's rated 18 in the UK, the language in it would make a dockworker blush, Raider and mutant camps are littered with bones and dismembered bodies, I can decapitate, beat to death and generally reduce my enemies to a red paste, green goo or ash pile. Yet if I take the time to scavenge the armour off my fallen foes after stepping over their brain stem or severed limbs, I take the trouble to replace corpses' armour with sensible vests and pants. I've looked all through my

inventory and it doesn't list Vest and Big Knickers (300) anywhere.

All the *Hitman* games were the same, with female characters showering and even stripping in their underwear, even though I could cheerfully murder them should I so choose.

Now I'm not a raging pervert for pixel boobs, but for heaven's sake, if gore is allowed without limits, language is gleefully obscene and the game is clearly rated 18 then by what skewed moral compass is the naked human form beyond the pale? Do games publishers sit round the table with

developers going: "OK the decapitatory headshots are fine, we like the gory dismemberment, heck the swearing is almost soft in our opinion... but what are you trying to do to us with the tits? We almost vomited". It's an absolute nonsense.

Jason Tew

Well said. Of course this bizarre double standard exists everywhere, and we fear it's only a matter of time before nipples are surgically removed at birth and possibly then stitched together to form bedsheets for rich perverts.

CHANGING

I'm liking the addition of the new *State of Play* feature. There are so many games that have radically altered since first release, and you can only wonder how many players have been turned off because of a bad demo, or a botched release with rushed and buggy patches.

With the advent of digital distribution and the auto patching motherlode that is Steam, we can't go back and see how *Counter-Strike: Source* played when it first came out – history itself has been automatically patched, if you like.

Also, a corking article from Pavel Barter on games censorship. I'd like to see him cover games design – asking how

developers dream up games, where they draw their inspiration from, and what process they go through to form a design.

Chris

PS: Valve – make a new *Counter-Strike* now! Give it to Turtle Rock after the awesome job they did on *Left 4 Dead*.

State of Play was conjured up to keep people up to speed with *Age of Conan*, an MMO that kept on transforming drastically during its first few months. When one of the updates caused all of the female characters' chests to inflate to the point of near-explosion, we just couldn't let it pass without comment.

Age of Conan now has fewer than 100,000 subscribers.



Having connection problems? Check your broadband for dogs.



As for *Counter-Strike 2*, we're hoping it appears alongside *Episode Three* and *Portal 2* in some sort of glorious *The Orange Box* sequel spectacular. That would be nice.

ONLINE GRIPES

Left 4 Dead is designed to be played online – you'll only play single-player once. Yet the experience of accessing a multiplayer game is absolutely rubbish. I spend 20% of my playing time finding for a game – that's five or six searches each time. I'm utterly frustrated before I start playing! If this was a single-player game that you had to load six times to play, it would never have been launched.

Your review made scant mention of this! It should have foreseen the frustrations users would experience and torn Valve apart. This leads to another point. It may be that you couldn't assess this issue fully when you did your review, rather like it is difficult to fully evaluate an MMO until it is a few months old and has a community. Therefore, it's no longer good enough to follow the tradition of reviewing a gold master (with maybe, at best, a small test server community).

For online-focused games, you have to review them more than once – for instance a launch review and a mature review. The mature review will identify many of the issues not apparent at the game's launch and thus be more balanced and informative for anyone still considering purchase.

David Smith

Twenty percent? Surely you exaggerate. You're right that we can't foresee the sort of server issues people might have when we're reviewing at launch – in the case of *Left 4 Dead* we were playing with the Valve guys and saw no problems at all. That said, we play *Left 4 Dead* a lot and it's not particularly guilty of crimes against stable connections. Maybe your dog is sitting on the broadband cable.

As for re-reviews, that's the point of our regular *State of Play* feature, which re-evaluates games long after their release.

35 WAYS...

As the only sensible voice on PC gaming out there I was surprised to see your article on *35 Ways to Make PC Games Better* (issue 204) list at number two a suggestion that saved games should be placed in the game directory. This is wrong – saved games should always go in the user's My Documents folder, along with any user specific settings.

It was a huge relief when Microsoft finally introduced a directory where all user data was stored. As any Unix user would know it is virtually impossible to run a multi-user environment if you don't. Three reasons instantly spring to

ASK THE TXTPERTS

Want to know a PC game release date? Need advice on what graphics card to buy? Just want somewhere to rant incoherently in 'youth speak'? Simply text the PC ZONE 'Txtpters' (see what we did there?) and we'll answer you right here...

Vampire the masquerade was the 1st game I ever played on pc and has a storyline yet to be bettered, apart from deus ex. Will there be a 3rd vamp?
\$KJB\$

It doesn't look likely as Troika, the developers of *Bloodlines*, have dispersed.

Will expansion packs for *Fallout 3* be available at retail on disc?
Will Michael

Nope, it's all download-only.

Which of the following words can you print in the mag? Fuck, c***, shit, b****sh, massive *****es, hairy **** on a *****.
Steven

Depends on how we're feeling. Today we feel... conservative!

YOUR SHOUT!

SEND US YOUR REVIEWS
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FAR CRY 2

Sent in by Matt Waters

PC ZONE score: 90%

Welcome to *Far Cry 2*, where weapons magically reappear in their racks, where buses are impervious to machine gun fire, briefcases packed full with diamonds dot the landscape, and GPS handsets all seem to have built-in diamond detectors.

Far Cry 2 could have been good, but it just feels far too unrealistic, especially since it's set in what is meant to be a real-world environment. Most fantasy RPGs have more convincing in-game world environments than this.

Plus it screams that it's a multi-platform title.

And where are all the elephants?

Your shout: 60%



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mind. Imagine your girlfriend plays your games and you have separate accounts.

Firstly, her account needs escalated privileges to write to Windows' Program Files directory.

Secondly, by putting all the saved games in one directory you need to either get each user to name their saved games in such a way that you know whose is whose or, if you can't choose the filename of a saved game – and as I had to do in the case of *Morrowind* – you have to write a script to swap out one user's saved games into a backup directory and

“You'll find our review scores can be graphed using something similar to a probability density function”

swap in the other's, and remember to run it before you play.

Thirdly, even in a single user environment, when you come to do backups you wind up having to either dump huge chunks of your Program Files directory tree onto your backup disc or spend hours looking for all the saved games directories and adding them to your backup script separately (Steam anyone?) which drives me nuts.

There are reasons that the My Documents folder exists. There is no reason why games should be exempt.

Anyway, that rant notwithstanding, love the mag and have been a subscriber for 10 years.

Chris Beton

Oh, so that's why our saved games are everywhere? Well, OK then. That sounds reasonable enough. Carry on.

ALGEBRAIC!

Percentage. What an intriguing bit of mathematics that is! Discovered in the year 100 by Dr John Percentage, it was a useful tool applied to simple things such as marking tests consisting of 100 questions. But then someone woke up one morning and thought, “Wouldn't it be hilarious if I applied this simple principle

to a complex subject, a subject such as computer games!”

I've tried to give games a rating out of 100 and found it remarkably complicated! 100% is double 50% right? Well yes and no. You see, if we were talking about the percentage of people who would rather be smashed in the face with a brick than play *Turning Point: Fall of Liberty* (about 96%, I checked) then it works fine! Now consider a game. It does not seem fitting to suggest that a mediocre game is half as fun as a perfect game. I think the fact that *PC ZONE* has never given a perfect score to a game is testament to how ridiculous that sounds!

This leads me to the question: how on Earth do you rate games? And why is this formula not published so to inspire kids to become mathematicians and make this world a little more... utopian! Or boring, take your pick.

Joseph Battershell

Our scoring system isn't a simple, linear equation – a game scoring 100 isn't necessarily twice as good as a game scoring 50. Instead you'll find our review scores can be ideally graphed using something similar to a probability density function.

We score on the curve, with a mean somewhere in the upper half.



LOST IN THE POST

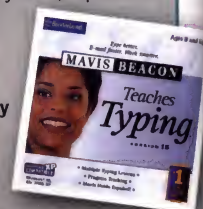
LETTERS FROM A DECADE AGO, ANSWERED TODAY

MAVIS BEACON

Ever since seeing her friendly but calmly efficient face on the cover of her *Teaches Typing* software I've had strong yearnings for Mavis Beacon. Hardly a day has gone by that I haven't thought of her, of the times we could have together, the candle lit dinners during which we would discuss the merits of the Qwerty layout or the challenges of Audio typing. Now I've heard a dreadful rumour that she doesn't exist! Surely this can't be true. This is a major blow for Mavis fans everywhere, so please tell me it's not true.

B. Moore

This letter was printed in the very first issue of *PC ZONE* back in 1993. In fact the magazine was started because of such unsolicited letters about PC games randomly turning up at Paul Lakin's house. I mean, how else would we have letters in the first issue? You can't just make this stuff up.



This bias appears because, where we cannot cover every game being released, we'll tend to review the better ones – resulting in a skewed average score across every magazine. However, there's a standard deviation of between 10 and 15 percent, and that's assuming games have innate “true” scores and that those scores are normally distributed.

Considering PC games have been around a long time, and will be around forever, scoring in this fashion is the most sensible method. This also means that a game scoring 100 is infinitely great, and you could probably play it for a good eight hours before you got bored. [PZ]

PCZONE AROUND THE WORLD

We want photos of you with *PC ZONE* in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

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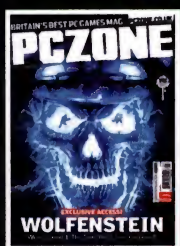
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COVER STORY

WOLFENSTEIN

The more Nazis change, the more they stay the same





NO MORE MECHA-HITLERS, roast dinners, or blood-thirsty Alsatians – does this mean no joy for Raven's sequel to the genre-founding *Wolfenstein* series? Not in the slightest. The Nazi-culling occult shooter introduces the Veil, an extra dimension probably worth about 1,000 roast dinners and maybe five angry German dogs. The game hinges on 'BJ' Blazkowitz's ability to pop into this world at any time, and wreak havoc with the Third Reich from this plane of existence. All we know is it's green, it's mean, and it makes the enemy easy to be seen (thanks to their glowing faces, which makes it look like they've rubbed spunk in their eyes, and had a light shone on them by the CSI guys).

PAGE

50

**PCZONE**

UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the **world of PC gaming**

Serious matters

VALVE'S GABE NEWELL reckons that people play pirated games because pirates offer a better service, not because they're trying to save cash. So instead of saying Steam will beat the pirates, Newell thinks they're doing all they can to match them.

And PC games are special. While console owners still have to buy their games in a box, we can download to our heart's content. And latest figures have been able to track our spending habits, showing that the PC games are overpriced. Read about Newell's DICE keynote on p19 and you'll see this.

But where does it stop? When will cheaper be cheap enough? Everyone knows that giving free DVDs in the weekend papers has devalued them. Now unless they're under a tenner, no-one's interested in buying one.

I still like to go to a shop and get a physical product, but I know I'm in the minority. Before *ZONE*, I ran a trade magazine for videogame retailers, who'd only be too keen to tell me how damaging piracy (and digital distribution) is to them.

In fact anything to do with piracy annoys me. Aside from the quality not being as good in most cases, I hate to think of anyone involved in the creation of something not being rewarded for their work.

I'll get off my soapbox now, but it's just something to think about – let us know what you think via the usual methods. I'll try not to be so serious next time...

Ali Wood

Ali Wood, Editor
ali.wood@futurenet.com

LORD SAVE US

Overlord II turns us evil – again

DEVELOPER Triumph PUBLISHER Codemasters
WEBSITE triumphstudios.com ETA May 2009

SEAL CLUBBING SPLITS people into two distinct groups. The first is comprised of animal lovers blind to the suffering of all but the cutest things in nature – they'd stomp on an old man's face sooner than they'd let a puppy fall down some stairs. The second are an antagonistic bunch of wankers who only take their pro-culling stance in order to wind up what they perceive to be a bunch of namby-pamby middle-class neo-hippies. It's a difficult argument to remain objective about – though we reckon Triumph studios have nailed it with *Overlord II*.

Throughout one particular level, in which your milling crowd of minions are testing you to ensure you are truly their evil Overlord, you're killing baby seals

because, as one minion rightly points out, "they're eating the poor fishies". This remorseless violence continues until the nature-loving elves appear, protesting your dastardly ways and threatening to take action. These guys are Greenpeace in all but name, led by a camp elf called Florian, from Fairyland (our press kit even describes him as 'emo'). A more unbiased and fairly judged assessment of seal-culling we've yet to see in games.

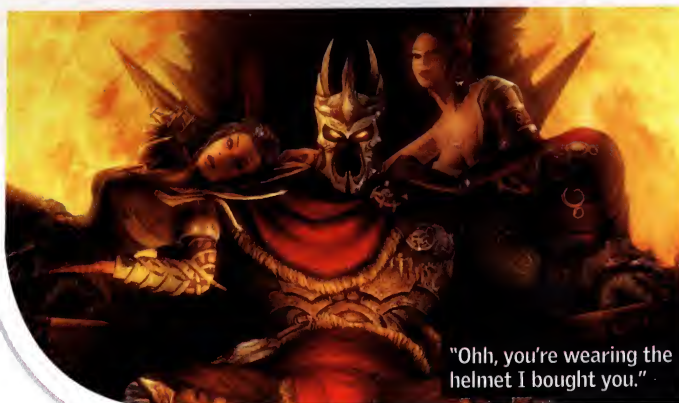
Overlord II is swathed in parody. Following on from the first game's expansion, *Raising Hell*, in which the Overlord is cast into the abyss and the mantle of Most Evil Bloke Around is passed onto his unborn child. Starting

out as the 'Overlad', you'll learn the ropes as you grow into the heinous character on the front of the box.

The premise here is the same, you're forever in command of a large group of skittering minions – impish creatures who act on your behalf, becoming an extension to your own body. You'll do very little fighting, instead ordering your underlings to go forth and solve puzzles, pile on top of enemies and club sheep to death.

This time around your four kinds of minions can ride four kinds of mounts. It's around the use of these mounts that many of *Overlord II*'s new puzzles will be focused.

We'll have a lavish preview next month, when hopefully we'll have gotten to grips with a fully playable version. Codemasters are boasting an improved camera system on the console version, so it'll be interesting to see how this translates to PC. The previous game gave us RSI in our mousing wrists.



"Ohh, you're wearing the helmet I bought you."

STOP PRESS!

LEFT 4 HEAD

There's a new pornographic version of *Left 4 Head* doing the rounds, featuring the Poker, Groper and Splooger zombies. Necrophilic porn. Worrying.

DEAD ALIENS

More evidence that Obsidian's *Aliens* RPG is no more has surfaced. Ex-employee David Kondor's online CV says he'd worked on the "now-defunct" project.

ON THE STREET

Wondering where the PC version of *Street Fighter IV* is? So are we. "Let's say summer," sighed Capcom's Christian Svensson when asked about a release date.

34

Battlefield 1943: Pacific

Swap realism for outright fun with this WWII shooter.



44

The History of Everquest

The story of the first real MMO.



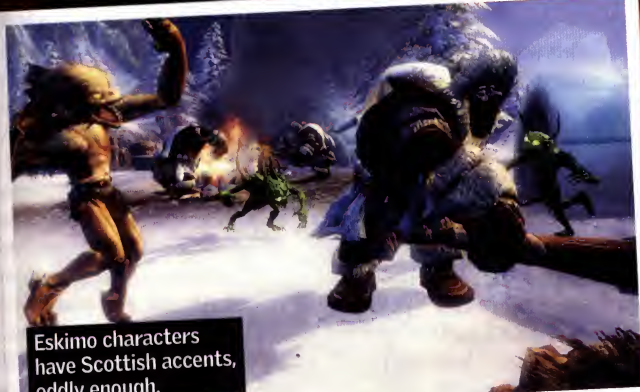
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Wolfenstein

Find out the latest news about the Nazi stomping classic.



The story revolves around the rise of a decadent and gluttonous civilisation.



Eskimo characters have Scottish accents, oddly enough.

STUFF

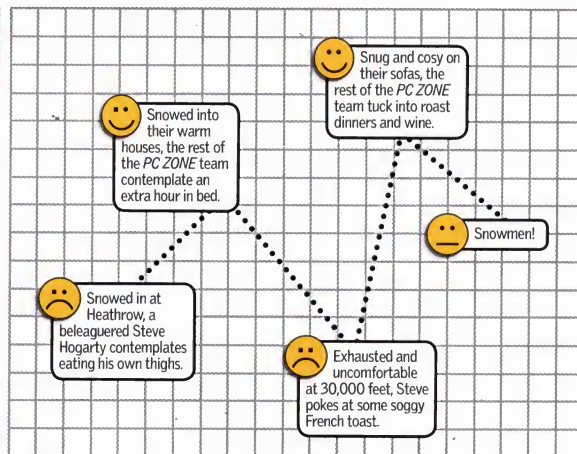
Until now Alan Wake has been a shadowy figure in the distance. Now his figure is becoming a little bit more solid, as Remedy have revealed a smidge more to us about the plot, written by Mr Wake himself. "The protagonist is now my namesake, and his wife is called Alice... the genre seems to be shifting... turning into a horror story... but this morning, a breakthrough! When I came to my senses, I could smell her perfume on my shirt. I am close. I know it. I must push on." Spooky.

Life is a roller coaster

GOOD TIMES

ON THE FENCE

BAD TIMES



IT BEGINS AGAIN

SHIT! HOW LONG LEFT?

DEADLINE

Well aren't you menacing?

CRUNCH TIME

As developers join the dole queues, are we seeing an end to gaming as we know it, wonders Pavel Barter

THE STAFF AT EA Canada – the publisher's biggest studio and home to EA Sports – knew that something was up. It was early in February 2009, and a week beforehand over 100 people had been laid off from Black Box, EA's *Need for Speed* studio in nearby Vancouver. Now meetings were being cancelled, projects were put on hold, and people started fearing the worst. Palle Hoffstein knew his days were numbered when a fellow producer was summoned to the manager's office. Sure enough, he received his marching orders a short time later.

Hoffstein was understandably upset. He enjoyed working for EA – the

company had great facilities, perks, and friendly co-workers – and he planned on being there for a long time, and the fact he had to leave the facility immediately did not make the layoff any easier.

"You can't log onto your PC, or talk to your now ex-coworkers," he says. "You're escorted out right away. It sucks, but I understand it and respect it. If the position had been switched I would do things the same way. You can't afford to have an angry ex-employee log onto their PC and delete data or art in the moment of emotion. And with each day at the office costing a lot of money allocated to projects, you can't afford all the loss of time to the remaining staff if they spend the day saying goodbyes."

Hoffstein's story is one of thousands. Over the last couple of months, the global games industry has been cutting staff with almost religious fervour. Microsoft laid off 1,400, including the general manager of Games for Windows LIVE and 30% of all their videogame testers. Eidos closed their Rockpool Games Studio in Manchester, while Crystal Dynamics (*Tomb Raider Underworld's* developers) gave 30 staff the boot. THQ laid off 600, 24% of their workforce; *Mortal Kombat* publisher Midway have applied for Chapter 11 bankruptcy for their US operations; and CPU manufacturer AMD has cut 1,000 jobs. This is a culling of Biblical proportions.

Yet the games industry appears in rude health. According to a report from researchers NPD Group, the software market grew 15% in the US and 26% in the UK during 2008. While most shops are wringing their hankies like widows, high street game retailers, such as GAME, are reporting profits. Is the games industry recession proof?

"Historical data supports this statement, but today's economic landscape is unlike past events," says David Riley, director, The NPD Group.

So why are the job cuts happening? Nels Anderson, a developer recently laid off by Klei Entertainment (creators of kids PC titles *Sugar Rush* and *Eets*) reckons that as the spectre of recession looms, larger organisations can justify layoffs even if there is little financial need, calming nervous shareholders and reducing costs "without the bad press that would occur during calmer times".

Hoffstein, meanwhile, says publishers have begun to follow the model of record companies and movie studios, which have been reducing the amount of film and album releases in recent times. "They hope fewer titles will mean more hits," he says. "Personally, I think this is misguided." There's also an increasing trend toward outsourcing development talents, risking a loss in quality and consistency, he adds.

Larger publishers, paranoid about saving their arses, are now emphasising their blockbuster franchises like *Call of Duty* and *Final Fantasy*. So will financial misery mean more sequels? "Nothing is guaranteed, but proven formulas like this will likely be a part of their marketing mix until the economy improves," says Riley.

"You can't log onto your PC, or talk to your now ex-coworkers. You're escorted out right away"



Half Life 2 mod Dystopia is recession-proof.

Side-scrolling MMOs are unfalteringly popular, and so recession proof.



Despite the apocalyptic behaviour of the larger publishers, some developers believe the credit crunch could mark a rebirth for gaming. Gala Inc, creator of *Dragonica*, a 3D side-scrolling action MMO, is currently expanding its European HQ in Dublin and is recruiting 50 staff. Max Stolberg, the game's producer, has an optimistic approach.

"Recession always has been the harbinger of change. As one generation goes, a new one emerges," he says. "The '30s were a hugely popular and creative time for the movie and entertainment industry, even with the Great Depression going on. Now in the 21st century, a huge percentage of the population sees gaming as one of their primary sources of entertainment and we continue to see healthy increases in both player numbers and sales."

Free-to-play online games like *Dragonica* (gPotato.eu) are also increasing in popularity. "The main problem is that free-to-play games have an historical stigma of being seen as low quality. But at the end of the day, gamers only play games that are good."

In fact, the financial downturn could create a renaissance for indie games.



As an increasing amount of developers are laid off, smaller teams are likely to emerge. Without the massive overheads of a company the size of EA, they've the freedom to create more innovative titles.



iFluid – immune to recessions as well?

Roger Swindells, managing director of Ascaron Entertainment – developers behind experimental titles like *iFluid* and *AudioSurf* – says larger publishers with recognised franchises might have a greater marketing reach, but they won't necessarily appeal to you if you're looking for something different.

This is why the likes of *Dystopia* could mark a new phase for PC gaming. A fast-paced cyberpunk FPS, modelled on films like *Children of Men*, the game sees you taking on the role of a punk mercenary or a corporate



security official, battling in the real-world and cyberspace. Created using the Source Engine, and available on Valve's Steamworks to around 15 million gamers, *Dystopia* might sound like a big-budget affair, but it's the brainchild of a ramshackle bunch of indie developers across the globe.

Publisher layoffs have left many casualties in their wake – Microsoft even dumped their longest-running game franchise, *Flight Simulator* – but they've also turned a fresh page for developers.

Hoffstein, for his part, bears no grudges toward EA, especially since they set up a job fair for him and other staff who were dismissed. Likewise, Klei "did everything they could to help find another gig" for Anderson, who now works at Hothead Games, another Vancouver-based studio. But as more developers start going their own way, free of corporate policies and executive decisions, PC games could start getting a hell of a lot better.

"I know that what I say right now will likely fall on deaf ears," says NPD's David Riley, "but the economic crisis will only make the industry stronger." **PCZ**

Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

@ letters@pczone.co.uk
pavel barter, pc zone,
2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw



Rage against the machine

Mike Sanders – *Dystopia*'s lead producer – calls for an indie game revolution

Q How does *Dystopia* differ to other PC games?

A There is now an atmosphere around games that don't have a corporate backing with a large chequebook. More and more people are coming in droves to play games that are made by guys that work in a coffee shop (*World of Goo*) or guys that always had their own ambitions (*Unknown Worlds*, *Introversion*, etc).

The time for big businesses to control how we play our games, how we enjoy ourselves after a day of work, and what we think creatively is over. This market shift of independent games, made by people with no backing or support, but some free time, is a new way of advocating human creativity.

Q Given the financial crisis, do you think there will be more opportunities for indie game makers over the next few years?

A I think the worldwide financial crunch is going to cause an astounding amount of opportunities for indie game developers. Hard workers are making the shift from comfortable to unemployed and broke, with nothing but a dream. It doesn't matter if it's the gaming industry or not, when people get let go – or when there is no money to be passed around – people think the same thing: "I'm sick of being part of the system. I don't want to be a cog in a machine anymore." I've seen more coffee shops, start-up restaurants and breweries started in the last two years than most would see in a lifetime.

Q Are indie games on the brink of a revolution?

A How else would the gaming industry in its current state go anywhere? Models of using the same game over and over again have been proven wrong too many times. You can remake a game, give it more content, package it up and put it on shelves. But it's still the same game.

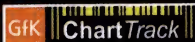
What it's important for people to realise is they've the power to make big businesses quiver in their boots. It's time to get serious about your games or small projects. We can do this.

Flight Simulator, killed by the credit crunch.



PCZONE Charts

Official data compiled by



- 1 **NEW** **WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR II**
Issue 205 - 78%
- 2 **↓** **FOOTBALL MANAGER 2009**
Issue 202 - 90%
- 3 **NEW** **F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN**
Issue 204 - 80%
- 4 **↓** **WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WRATH OF LICH KING**
Issue 202 - 86%
- 5 **↓** **THE SIMS 2: DOUBLE DELUXE**
N/A
- 6 **↑** **THE SIMS 2: APARTMENT LIFE**
N/A
- 7 **↓** **COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 3**
Issue 201 - 86%
- 8 **↓** **SPORE**
Issue 199 - 95%
- 9 **↓** **GRAND THEFT AUTO IV**
Issue 203 - 91%
- 10 **↓** **CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR**
Issue 202 - 84%
- 11 **↑** **WORLD OF WARCRAFT: BATTLE CHEST**
N/A
- 12 **↓** **FALLOUT 3**
Issue 201 - 91%
- 13 **NEW** **CSI: NEW YORK**
N/A
- 14 **↓** **FOOTBALL MANAGER LIVE**
Issue 205 - 85%
- 15 **↓** **LEFT 4 DEAD**
Issue 202 - 90%
- 16 **↓** **FAR CRY 2**
Issue 201 - 90%
- 17 **↑** **FIFA MANAGER 09**
Issue 203 - 67%
- 18 **↓** **WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR COMPLETE**
Issue 194 - 82%
- 19 **NEW** **KING'S BOUNTY: THE LEGEND**
N/A
- 20 **↓** **CRYSIS**
Issue 188 - 92%

**F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN**

Alma's back! Are you tired of reading that? Well, we're tired of writing it. So we're never going to use that phrase again. In this issue.

**THE SIMS 2: DOUBLE DELUXE**

An add-on for *The Sims 2* - the God game that's been stopping people living healthy and fulfilling lives since 2004.

**SPORE**

The creationist propaganda tool is still charting, despite a backlash on the internet. As usual *PC ZONE* was right all along!

**FALLOUT 3**

So the *Operation Anchorage* DLC was a big turd, but *The Pitt* looks good and a massive patch means the core game is much better.

**TITANIC DLC**Bumper expansion pack released for *UT3*WEBSITE unrealtournament3.com/uk

EPIC, REALISING THAT their hoped-for flagship *Unreal Tournament 3* is flagging, have released a massive DLC for the shooter.

The aptly named *Titan* pack will contain 16 environments, consisting of four Warfare, three vehicle and three regular Capture-the-Flag, and six Deathmatch maps, all new to the PC; three bonus pack maps, CTF-Face, CTF-Searchlight and DM-Morbias; two new weapons - the Stinger Turret and

Eradicator Cannon artillery; X-Ray field and Link Station deployables; and a new vehicle - the Stealthbender.

Completing the raft of new stuff are two new characters; 57 achievements; a portable Slow Field; the Titan mutator that transforms players into 15 or 30-foot tall giants; Greed and Betrayal game types; and a raft of AI and gameplay improvements, including better networking, server and mod support.

And the best bit is *Titan* is free.

**APOGEE IS BACK**

Retro retailer now sells a retro publisher

WEBSITE gog.com

THE GANG AT Good Old Games have added to their catalogue with the addition of a range of games from Apogee Software.

The list includes games such as the classic shooters *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Manhattan Project*, *Blake Stone: Aliens of Gold* and *Planet Strike*, and *Rise of the Triad: Dark Water*.

"We're absolutely ecstatic to announce Apogee Software as the latest publisher to sign on with the site," said

an excited Adam Oldakowski, *gog.com*'s head honcho. "Having games like *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Rise of the Triad* on GOG is amazing. These are the games that defined the shooter genre and pushed PC gaming forward, and GOG.com is all about bringing back legendary games like that.

"These are some of the best games of all time, and now they're available online. We think that's awesome." And so do we. Thanks GOG.com!

THE PRICE ISN'T RIGHT

Valve president slams cost of games, praises pirates

WEBSITE steamgames.com

SPEAKING AT THE annual DICE Summit, Valve Software's head Gabe Newell spoke out about his belief that videogames are too pricey, and claimed people who pirate games are simply providing a service; a good one.

"The pricing issue is misleading," he said. "In the PC audience, people are spending thousands of dollars on their PCs and their internet connectivity. They're perfectly happy to spend money, so that's not the issue. But when it

comes to the service, that's where the pirates are way ahead of us."

Newell said since Steam has been experimenting with prices of games, they've found the average game is priced too high.

A Valentine's weekend promotion for *Left 4 Dead* cut the price of the game in half to \$24.99, which boosted sales by 3,000%. Although new content in that edition could have been a factor in the sales boost.

"We sold more in revenue [during the promotion] than we did when we



Gabe Newell
Valve's managing director

launched the product," said Newell. "We were driving a huge uptick in revenue and attracting new customers."

Newell also said that non-Valve games also benefit from the discounts. Sales of one, unspecified, game rose 18,000% during one Steam promotion, while units sold increased 36,000%. That sounds dramatic, but we don't know what sales were like originally.

In related news, games from JRPG publisher Square Enix – the publisher of the *Final Fantasy* series – will soon be available on Steam, with *The Last Remnant* being the first to become available on 9 April.



One in the eye
for this zombie...



Old Zoey > New Zoey?

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* Normal monthly subscription rate is £9.99. You may cancel your membership at any time.





ENTER SANDMAN

TF2's Scout update and what it means to you

WEBSITE teamfortress.com

THE SCOUT HAS been the latest *Team Fortress 2* class to receive a boost. So how has it managed to shape up? What goodies can you unlock? Let's see what's in there.

First up is The Sandman. This is a new baseball bat the Scout can use to stun his opponents. This stun attack isn't activated by just whacking someone over the head with it, you have to smack a baseball from distance and clonk them on the noggin.

Once stunned, you finish them off from close range. The further away you hit the ball from, the longer they are stunned for. Also, in a move that has divided *TF2* fans, invulnerable characters aren't immune to this stunning attack. Whether that is a good move or not, that's up to you to decide. Also, when you are wielding The Sandman, you can't double jump.

Next up we have the Force-A-Nature shotgun, a replacement to the Scout's standard weapon. As with all *TF2* updates, it has its pros and cons. The major positive is that it packs a wallop and, with the significant kickback when fired, you can effectively rocket-jump using it. When combined with The Sandman bat, presumably you can negate the anti-double jump of that particular weapon with the Force-A-Nature. The downside is that it only carries two shells (it's a double-barrelled shotgun) and it has a long reload time, so Scouts carrying this thing won't be doing any spray-shooting – every shot will have to count.

Rounding off the unlockable items is the 'Bonk' Energy Drink, which gives the Scout a "few-second rush of radioactive energy so powerful you'll be dodgin' bullets like they ain't even there".

Useful for getting out of tricky situations or sprinting across open spaces. However, the inevitable downside is that, once the effects wear off, you'll be significantly slower than normal for a little while.

All these are, of course, unlocked after getting certain numbers of Scout-specific achievements, which include the Moon Shot (stun an enemy with a maximum range shot), the Round Tripper (capture the intelligence 25 times), and The Big

Hurt (stun 25 übered enemies). There are 35 in total to get, ranging from relatively easy to buttock-slappingly difficult.

Let us not forget the non-Scout updates though. First we have two new maps – Arena_Watchtower, CP_Egypt and CP_Junction – which were created by members of the *TF2* community, then we have an update to CP_Fastlane, one of the first community maps Valve decided to release. Egypt looks like the most interesting one to us, with a style that is significantly different to the norm.

All in all, these are good quality updates, with lots of new stuff and reasons to keep playing the game. Let's just hope Valve keep the updates coming, as rumours this will be the only one this year are too much for us to bear!



Expect too many of this guy on virtually every server.

Use the 'Bonk' drink to run across open areas like this.

LEAD WITH RIGHTEOUS FURY



OUT NOW



WWW.DAWNOFWAR2.COM



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Games for Windows **LIVE**

1



TROPICO 3

DEVELOPER Haemimont Games PUBLISHER Kalypso WEBSITE kalypsomedia.com ETA TBC

MANY YEARS HAVE passed since we last took control of a tin-pot dictatorship in the Caribbean. In fact, the first *Tropico* was released way back in 2001, with the sequel being based around pirates and booty (the doubloons kind of booty, in case you were wondering).

Now Haemimont's second sequel is returning to its roots, with players taking the role of El Presidente, and trying to deal with the problems of violent revolutionaries, corruption and Cold War superpowers muscling in on your activities.



6



The Bigger Picture

1 VIVA LA REVOLUCIÓN!

You'll need to be mindful of the threat of revolution, with budding Che Guevaras constantly trying to chip away at your popularity and regime. It's up to you how ruthlessly you deal with them.

2 ROMANI ITE DOMUM

Religion could prove to be an important part of the game, with a God-fearing populace more willing to follow your lead if you don't set fire to churches and burn priests in anti-Catholic pogroms.

3 CITY LIFE

The major urban centres are always bustling with activity and are superbly eclectic in terms of architecture and design. For example, the contrast between the gilded front of the church and the ramshackle wooden shacks nearby.

4 FAR CRY

The game isn't all urban chaos, of course. There's plenty of wildlife, vegetation and Caribbean sunsets to watch through the palm trees and rustling grassland.

5 ARMED AND DANGEROUS

One way of keeping the population in line is to invest in military facilities and your armed forces. Few citizens will want to demonstrate against you after receiving a healthy dose of tear gas.

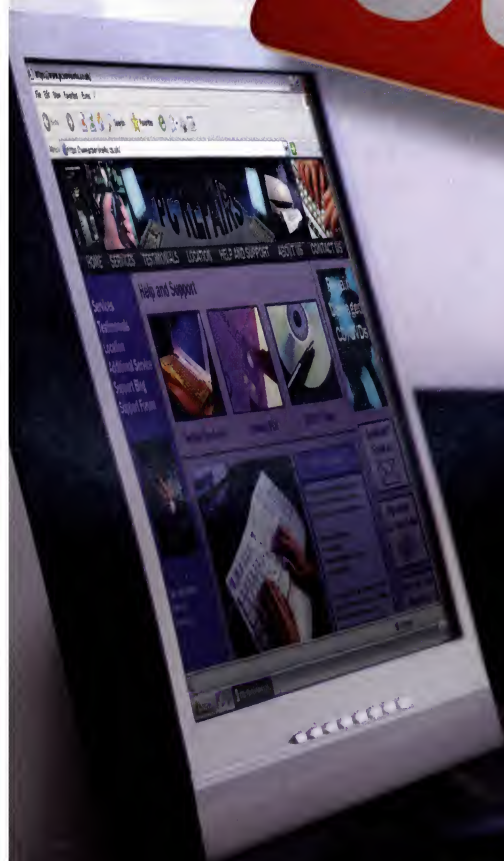
6 SUNSET BOULEVARD

Tropico 3 is looking colourful and exuberant. Whether the humour of the previous games is still present remains to be seen, but at the moment we're pleasantly surprised by how things are shaping up.



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FREEFORM FUN...

JUST CAUSE 2

The island of Panau is under the thrall of an evil dictator and only **David Brown** can save the day

DEVELOPER Avalanche Studios PUBLISHER Eidos Games WEBSITE eidos.com

IHAD AN intense dislike for *Just Cause*. Despite its claims of hi-octane action and adventure, plus a nifty parachute, the game felt cold (ironic, considering the tropical setting) and the fact I could run around for ages, getting sprayed by bullets, and yet take virtually no damage made me steer well clear after an hour or so of play. Never mind that though, *Just Cause 2* has fired my imagination more than the first one ever did.

First of all, and this is a shallow reason, the graphics are eye-popping – particularly when you stand on a mountain and look down at the sprawling vistas below. Especially the clouds, they look awesome, as I believe young hip-trendy people of today say.

"We'll have rain and snow and thunderstorms, so you can see them in the distance," says Peter Johansson,

lead designer on *Just Cause 2*. "There could be mist as well. If you're playing all the way through the game you'll probably get some rain on you, it's really dynamic in that way."

This extends to one of the game's core concepts too: destruction. You'll need to blow up a lot of stuff up in *Just Cause 2*, because mayhem means prizes.

EXTREME CHAOS

The main campaign missions become available as you cause havoc in and around the 261 settlements in the huge 1,000km² world map. The map is around the same size as the previous game's, but this time Avalanche say it's all about quality over quantity (even though they haven't skimped on that side of things).

"Each different climate zone has its own buildings and environments, so a village in the Arctic zone is going to look different and feel different to a desert village," says Johansson.

"For example, the desert town is a civilian settlement, so we didn't have



Gives a new meaning to the phrase "surfing the highway".

**ETA
AUTUMN
2009**

any restrictions in it, while there are also some military bases and air bases, where you will be attacked the moment you enter. There are also different types of things there, so if you go into a military base, you'll find you're destroying different things, like weapon stashes and so on.

"I wouldn't say the variety was unlimited, because that would be just stupid. I mean, we're not forcing the player to do everything – that's part of the whole freedom that he has: he can explore the world in his own way."

What about the combat though?

Will it be a repetitive grind-fest where you just do the same thing for hours?

"What we have is basically the key missions that are unlocked by causing chaos, and there's always going to be this area of influence that grows, with missions popping up there. It's always going to be pretty clear about what you can do to cause the next level of chaos, so that's really important.

"We have a flexible system, so that's really a balancing issue, as in how much chaos do we force the player to cause to unlock the next key mission, and if we put that bar too high, then that'll be bad.

THE LOWDOWN

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Stunning views | ✓ |
| Impressive graphics | ✓ |
| Realistic clouds | ✓ |
| Loads of action and mayhem | ✓ |
| Loads of locations... | ✓ |
| ...so repetition could be an issue | ✗ |

THE STORY SO FAR... AVALANCHE STUDIOS

EMERGENCE
Avalanche Studios
is founded by three
industrious Swedes.



JUST CAUSE
The open-world
actioner gets positive
critical reception.



JUST CAUSE 2
Avalanche work hard
to right the wrongs
of *Just Cause*.



THE FUTURE
Avalanche's future
could involve a game
called *The Hunter*.

The future

2003

2006

2009

A chopper with
no blades = Fail.

"I SAID I WANTED
UNLEADED!"

"You'll need to blow up a lot of stuff – mayhem means prizes"

We don't want it to be like grinding, so it's important that we hit that balance."

And what of the parachute and the grappling hook? They're both still there and, thankfully, better implemented than in the first game. The grapple is now permanently attached to your left wrist (in a weird glove-thing) and the parachute is also much easier to deploy.

The stunts you can pull off are again outrageous – leaping around on moving vehicles, parachuting onto planes and taking out the pilots, McBain-style – it's all there, and it all seems more exciting than before.

"We looked at what was important in the first game, like we had these stunts, these really cool stunts, but they

didn't feel really integrated into the game, because Rico can do all these really cool things but they didn't really feel meaningful.

"So that was one of the things we've done, integrating all these cool things that Rico can do into everything you can do, combat, moving around and so on. We have all these features in there and they interact with each other, so fun stuff keeps happening you all the time."

Judging from what we've seen so far, we're inclined to agree. We'll be getting a hands-on with the game in the next few months, so watch for more on Rico's adventures.

DirectX 10 only

Avalanche explain why *Just Cause 2* will be for Vista only

"It was important for us to go to DirectX 10, for the engine and what we wanted to do with it, the amount of destructibility and everything," explained Peter Johansson.

"DirectX 9 would put limits on what we can do with the engine, and we're developing the PC version in parallel with the console versions, and it was important for us to be able to deliver this."

Make of this what you will. Suffice it to say, unless an internet wizard can pull a rabbit out of his hat and get it to run on XP, *Just Cause 2* will be a solely Vista experience. This will certainly cause an uproar online, but then again, just about everything does these days.



SPORTING CHANCE

Will *Football SuperStars* appeal to hardcore gamers and football fans? CyberSports think so

DEVELOPER CyberSports PUBLISHER CyberSports WEBSITE footballsuperstars.com

IN JUST OVER a year registrations for CyberSports' football MMO have risen at an incredible rate with over 250,000 signed up and 2,000 now joining every day. It's not just the players getting involved either as lucrative in-game advertising deals with the likes of Nokia, PUMA and Reebok have secured the game's future as a free-to-play fixture in the sporting calendar.

Ali Wood chatted to Steve Marshall, creative director at CyberSports to find out why *Football SuperStars* is scoring with the fans.

THE LOWDOWN

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| First proper MMO football game | ✓ |
| Appeal to football fans | ✓ |
| Casual and hardcore elements | ✓ |
| Micro-transactions | ✗ |
| Who'll play in goal? | ✗ |

Q From the stats we've seen, the growth in people playing *Football SuperStars* over the last year has risen at an impressive rate. What's the attraction?

A Up until now, we've been pretty quiet about what we're doing, relying mostly on viral activity and word of mouth. But with our final touches in place we're making more noise about *Football SuperStars*.

We've seen that many of closed beta testers have chosen the *FSS* world to be their virtual home and spend valuable spare time within our world. Fans all over the world are extremely passionate about football and we've caught the imagination of hundreds of thousands of people by giving them an opportunity of realising their dream or simply spending time with like-minded individuals.

You say you want to appeal to both casual and hardcore gamers, how are you going to do that? And do you see *FSS* appealing to all ages and sexes?
We created three games and knitted them together with the lifestyle world.

'Kickabouts' are pitches scattered around where players can setup friendly three or five-a-side matches. These games may be public or private, and time or goal restricted. Players grow their key football talent by playing these games, but receive no money or fame.

'FS Club' games allow players to join one of 14 teams at character creation and play up to 11-a-side 90-minute matches competitively, teams are rated using a modified Elo system in a four-week seasonal league, allowing us to run any number of matches 24/7.

The final system is the 'Player Managed Club', which allows a player to create their own club, recruit other players and challenge other managers in player-controlled tournaments. We'll be introducing automated and seasonal

tournaments as well in future updates. These games require the players to organise the matches using our in-game features but will be a significant draw.

What's next for *FSS*' future?

With patches planned at least every other month and larger releases every six months, we'll introduce additional activities on the pitch and in the lifestyle world to enhance the experience. From increasing the library of animation-specific skills, such as the overhead kick, to allowing players to buy status symbols and introducing a player-run transfer system. We've years of changes planned and will continue to release them to the community as time goes by.

Do you feel at all nervous about SEGA unleashing *Football Manager Live*?

"We've years of changes planned and will continue to release them to the community as time goes by"



Steve Marshall
Creative director



THE STORY SO FAR... FOOTBALL SUPERSTARS

KICK OFF
Football SuperStars is ready two years after the idea was born.

May 2008



MONEY MEN
PUMA sign on, and get their Carnaby St store in the game.

June 2008



MORE MONEY MEN
Nokia sign on and the N96 phone becomes the game's GUI.

Jan 2009

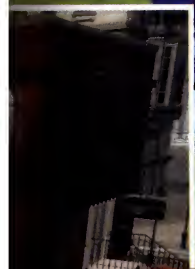


PROPER KICK OFF
First proper matches are played between superstar players.

Feb 2009



**ETA
SUMMER
2009**



This is a football pitch, not a bloody catwalk. Keep that hair in check.

Not at all, comparing *Football Manager Live* to *FSS* is akin to comparing a turn-based strategy fantasy game to a fantasy shooter. We do share some similarities, with *FSS* players are able to form their own teams with Player Managed Clubs, where they design their kit and recruit real people into their team, competing with them in their own leagues and tournaments comparable in many ways to a guild in MMORPGs. However, managers will be dealing with real players and not statistics, they may also have multiple squads playing at any given time.

The most successful of these PMCs will require delegated management roles to other club members, which we support with a hierarchical system. Members can be club captains, coaches and scouts each having their own role within the PMC from reviewing replays and hiring key members to ensuring that everyone on the team is training

at the gym and practicing their set pieces.

Is there a danger that people will sign up and then not feel obliged to return, because they don't pay to play?

The free-to-play aspect is a risk, but we're hoping players will be playing *FSS* because they love the game and find it a great place to spend their time, not because they feel obliged to persist with it due to spending hard-earned cash to buy a box.

Although it's possible to enjoy every aspect of *FSS* as a free player we do offer a subscription option. If you subscribe, you gain to benefit from a number of convenience features such as access to the sports centre and more locker space, and the ability to create and own a football club (free players may join an existing PMC but cannot own one).

We also leverage micro-transactions by allowing players to purchase bonds,



which can be used to buy anything from exclusive clothing to being converted into in-game dollars and help with training. This is especially useful for those that do not have 20 hours a week spare but wish to enjoy the full game.

We see *FSS* as a service and we treat every one of our users as a valued customer. We already take every comment made about our features, new and old, seriously. Our community have been responsible for changing the game for the better and will continue to do so.

Football is a global sport with an immeasurable fan base, our dream is that *FSS* will ultimately become a place to not only play football, but when you aren't competing for the *Football SuperStars* world cup, you'll stay to get news and views, and eventually watch your favourite PMC team play from anywhere in the world. **PCZ**

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OF ANY ROMAN CITY-BUILDING GAME THAT WE'VE SEEN."

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"MASSIVE BATTLES ARE A SITE TO BEHOLD..."

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GEARING UP...

NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT

David Brown gets a sneaky look at the next *Need for Speed*DEVELOPER Slightly Mad Studios PUBLISHER EA WEBSITE needforspeed.com

RECENT YEARS HAVE seen the *Need for Speed* series struggle to come to terms with what it was trying to achieve. Success with a street racing/car pimping formula naturally led to being overly reliant on 'cool' sounds, silly decals and various other hip things.

Then *Need for Speed: Undercover* came out, an attempt to reconnect with one of the most fondly remembered aspects of the franchise's oldest games, by bringing back the cop chases and melding them with a *Burnout*-style open world. Sadly, this didn't really work. Since then, EA have been wondering how to make the series interesting. The solution they have arrived at is to split the franchise into three – an online title, an arcade game, and the subject of this preview, a grown-up racing game.

Need for Speed: SHIFT is a radical departure for the series, developed by

Slightly Mad Studios, whose team primarily consists of some of the guys who made *GTR* and *GT Legends*. This means the game is aimed at people who take racing seriously, but that doesn't mean that fun has been sacrificed. Indeed, *SHIFT* seemed to be very much about having a good time, despite the sometimes-incredible detail Slightly Mad have managed to cram into its sleek gaming package.

THROTTLE ON

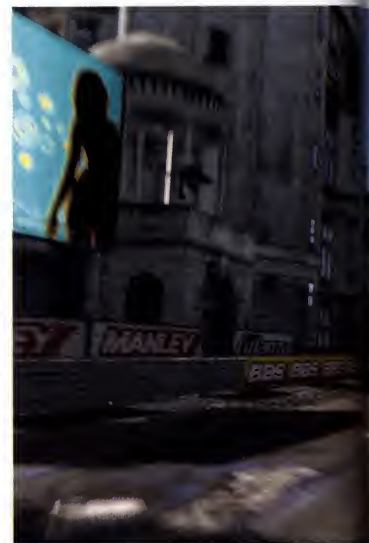
"There's tonnes of small details in there," claims Suzy Wallace, ex-ZONE scribe and producer on Slightly Mad's *SHIFT*. "We think that immersion comes from making the environment really believable. To that end, there's loads and loads of tiny little details that you might not notice until someone points them out. Things like, at high speed you'll get a depth-of-field shift, so the cockpit will blur out as you

start to feel your focus change more to the road in front of you."

"The focus is very much on real-world driving, real-world cars, so there's gonna be no cop chases, no open-ended world, no complicated storyline – the focus is very much on you as a driver. Everything in there is meant to reinforce that feeling."

As you'd expect, the game won't be one of those racing games you'll be able to win 90% of the races in straight away. *SHIFT* will require you to put the hard yards in if you want to get to the top. This is no bad thing at all – without challenge, there's no reason to play – and *SHIFT* has a very good learning curve. You do feel as if you've improved between each race, learning the tracks, feeling more comfortable with the handling of specific vehicles and so on. The AI is excellent and diverse, with some of the computer drivers aggressively undercutting you on corners while others approach difficult bends with caution, and the best ones will not be pushovers.

Another aspect of the game Slightly Mad have been

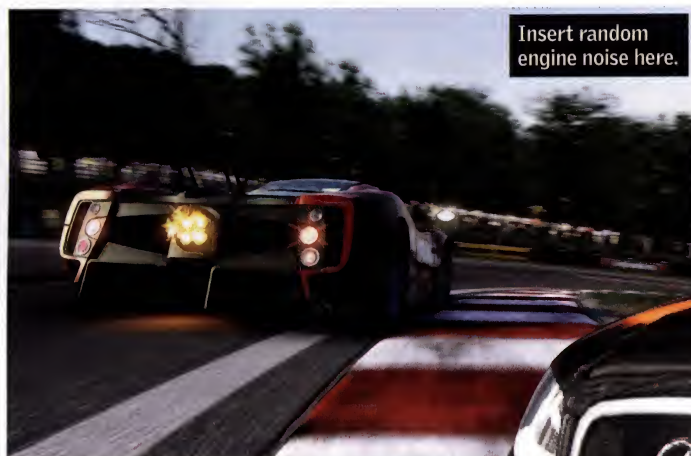


putting a lot of thought into is the damage model: "The way we had it originally, everything came off the car too easily. So what would happen is you

would drive around the corner and everyone would slide into the car next to them, and everyone's bumpers and stuff would start falling off. So we've actually turned it up," says Wallace.

"Stuff like that is subject to a lot of tweaking, but yeah, you can knock your front bumper off, your rear bumper, your spoiler, your wing-mirrors, everything."

**ETA
AUTUMN
2009**



Insert random engine noise here.

THE LOWDOWN

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Drop dead gorgeous | ✓ |
| Highly realistic... | ✓ |
| ...and yet still fun | ✓ |
| Challenging, in a good way | ✓ |
| Too techy for most NFS fans? | ✗ |



THE STORY SO FAR... NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT

GTR

The original *GTR* got a prestigious Classic award from *ZONE*.

2005



GT LEGENDS

GT Legends proved old cars were just as exciting as new ones.

2005



GTR2

More realistic than the original, it too got a Classic award.

2006



NFS: SHIFT

Is *SHIFT* another classic in the making? It's looking that way.

2008

Interior design

SHIFT's cockpits could be the most detailed in any racing game



Staggering is a word we don't use often, but the quality and detail that has been lavished on the interiors of the vehicles in *SHIFT* is staggering. You can even see your driver's feet move up and down on the pedals when you accelerate and brake. That doesn't mean the outsides have been ignored, of course.

"We've got full HDR lighting, fullscreen anti-aliasing, next-gen particle effects, really advanced tyre smoke, and full soft shadowing in the interior view," says Wallace. "Also there's motion blur and depth-of-field effects. Our engine literally supports the changing of the time of day at the press of a button, and can change all this on the fly."

Real London streets can be raced on.

As you'd expect from a game with this level of detail, the cars are varied and, most importantly for petrolheads, accurately modelled.

"We have a lower tier which has slightly more manageable cars to start off with, so in that we've got an Audi RS4, for example. In the higher tier, we have some more exotic machinery, like a Corvette Z06 and a Porsche GT2.

"The cars will feature full-on authentic race kits, with race liveries, bigger wheels and so on. There are also lots of environments, which are very lively – there's lots of stuff going on

around the tracks. Whereas normally in a driving game the focus is just on the cars and the tracks you can drive on, you'll see lots going on around the side of our tracks – animated marshals, 3D crowds, people waving flags and video screens." **PCZ**



"Oh saaaaay can you seeeee..."

So are they Nick, Herbie or Tony Hankook tyres?

YOU BUILD BRIDGE NOW!

BATTLEFIELD 1943: PACIFIC

David Brown takes on DICE at their own game and dies horribly

DEVELOPER DICE PUBLISHER EA WEBSITE battlefield.com



THE LOWDOWN

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Cheap | ✓ |
| Colourful | ✓ |
| Streamlined BF experience | ✓ |
| Back to WWII | ✓ |
| Back to WWII | ✗ |
| Hardcore fans might not be happy | ✗ |

LET'S CUT TO the chase here, people. This is the new *Battlefield* game and it's migrated back from a world of big stompy mech things to the more familiar environs of World War II. Despite my much-publicised exasperation with the continued overuse of this scenario, it's welcome in this case. I've never got on with mechs and futuristic settings for pseudo-realistic shooters – there's just something more satisfying about rending a Nazi's flesh from his bones than taking down a robot.

So the news of *Battlefield*'s return to Wake Island and other familiar locales is welcome. But will it live up to the expectations of the people who even now

are plugging away on the original game? A difficult question, answerable only by DICE themselves. Fortunately, we just happened to have a representative from DICE right next to us when we had a go on the game.

DEPTH PERCEPTION

Patrick Liu, lead producer on *Battlefield 1943: Pacific*, spoke to us about how the community has reacted: "I've been watching the forums since the announcement, and I think they're split. Mostly the people that don't like it, or rather the people who think they don't like it, aren't that well informed on what

kind of game it is. They assume that if it's a cheap small game that it's going to be casual. But it isn't.

"I think that once you actually try it, you'll really like it. With that said we have slimmed things down. You know we have only three maps, only three classes, regenerative health and all that. We have seen some complaints about these, but my response is that those systems don't make a game hardcore or casual. It's the whole of the game that makes it hardcore or casual. To be honest, I think using those terms is a really bad way of defining what a game is."

As Liu says, the game has been streamlined and tweaked to be less

"Everything else you'd expect from a *Battlefield* game is present. It's just all been streamlined"

THE STORY SO FAR... BATTLEFIELD

BATTLEFIELD 1942
People still play *BF1942*, despite it looking a bit rosey.

2002



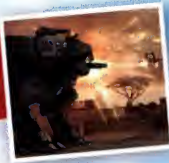
BATTLEFIELD 2
Now in the big time, the series moved to modern deserts.

2005



BATTLEFIELD 2142
Mechs were the mainstay of the third *Battlefield* game.

2006



BATTLEFIELD 1943
Back to Hitler's time we go, but the emphasis is on fun.

2009

ETA
**SUMMER
2009**

...before the storm.



The calm...

Blood, war, death and horror!

Destructible terrain is all the rage nowadays

DICE learned a lesson from the console-based *Bad Company*, it seems. People want to blow stuff up real good, so *BF1943* will be far more amenable to players who want to destroy everything.

For example, during one of my cowardly runs into hiding, I ended up in a

building, which was systematically taken apart by explosives and tanks. In the end, there wasn't much left to hide in.

There are places that can't be destroyed, like the buildings you use to call in bombing runs. But generally if you can see it, you can wreck it.

intimidating to new players. However, it'll also feature what some could describe as console concessions, like 'unlimited' ammunition and *Call of Duty*-style regenerating health. Some won't see this as a problem, but there are potential issues (unmovable snipers, impregnable defences) that might arise from these implementations.

"We're going to support 24 players, there are going to be three maps, one of them being Wake Island. I wouldn't call it a remake of *1942*, but it's strongly inspired by it. If you played Wake Island before, you'll recognise it in *1943*."

"*Battlefield* is a bit more accessible now, a more streamlined experience and

a more focused game, so I think if you're new to *Battlefield*, it should still be fairly easy to get into it."

Graphically, the game looks very colourful and vivid, which will mark a significant change in the art direction from *BF1942* (and the other games, to lesser degrees).

STAY FROSTY

This is possible by using the Frostbite engine, developed for *Bad Company* on consoles. Liu says the game, despite being "competitively priced", won't be skimping on the graphical detail.

"We're aiming for the high-end PC market, though I hope we're not pushing

for, you know, the spectrum of where *Crysis* went, because that was a bit too high. We don't want to lose players because they can't play the game."

Judging from the game we saw running, which was still pre-alpha code, it would be fair to say that the game will run comfortably on mid-spec PCs, so anyone out there who is concerned about ridiculous system requirements doesn't need to be unduly concerned about this.

What you might be concerned about is the lack of any single-player element. The tutorial level will, currently, teach you the game in the absence of any other players or bots. Mind you, bots

won't feature in the final version of the game either.

Everything else you'd expect from a *Battlefield* game is present and correct – cars, planes, boats, explosions and so on. It's just all been streamlined to make it less complicated. For example, there are now only three character classes – rifleman, soldier and scout. Engineering and anti-tank abilities have been shifted over to the rifleman and soldier classes, while the scout now has demolition duties to perform. There's also no medic, because of the regenerative health system. Which is kind of sad, because I always liked trying to kill people with my defibrillators. **PCZ**

PARADOX EFFECT

David Brown meets some fearsome strategy game developer vikings

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER Paradox Interactive **WEBSITE** www.paradoxplaza.com

ISN'T IT IRONIC, Alanis Morissette might once have said, that it was colder and snowier in the UK than it was in Sweden? I dressed up like an Eskimo in anticipation of a cold Nordic winter for no reason.

Other than my sartorial problems, the semi-frozen lands of Scandinavia provided an exciting backdrop to the event I was there to attend. Paradox Interactive, publisher and developer of some of the finest hardcore strategy of recent years, were unveiling a number of new games and expansions for 2009. And it fell to me to track down the developers and ruthlessly grill them.

First up was one of the sleeper hits of last year: *Mount&Blade*. TaleWorlds' joust-'em-up has proved to be a love-it-or-be-bemused-by-it game, but one of its producers, Cem Cimenbicer, wasn't that surprised by this reaction.

"I think it's the sort of game that, if you don't know about it, you might not want to take a risk on. It's a unique game and people are sometimes afraid of unique things."

Cimenbicer was primarily talking about the upcoming expansion to *Mount&Blade*, which will feature multiplayer battles, something the fans have been craving for some time. There'll be 50 player battles and sieges, with bots replacing absent players.

"We always wanted to make (multiplayer) happen, but we omitted it from the first release because it would push back the release by about a year," Cimenbicer explained. "I like the way bots interact with the world, and there are lots of complex calculations involved in getting them to behave realistically. We'll be improving them all the time, which will also affect the single-player module as well."

IRON CROSSING

Also in the past, just not so far back, was *Hearts of Iron III*, the ever-expanding new entry into that venerable World War II strategy series. Johan Andersson, the game's producer, told us that the game would have 15,000

provinces – around 300% more than *Hearts of Iron II*. He also promised the development team would improve the learning curve and introduce some AI management, so you don't have to deal with everything yourself.

"We're not finished with it yet, but I'm thinking that everything that's covered on one screen should have an AI toggle, yes or no, so that you should be able to have the AI build troops which are a reasonably fit for what you need to do, or handle the diplomacy and get you the allies and trade deals that you need, or declare war when it is historically good. Of course, the AI may not always do what you want."

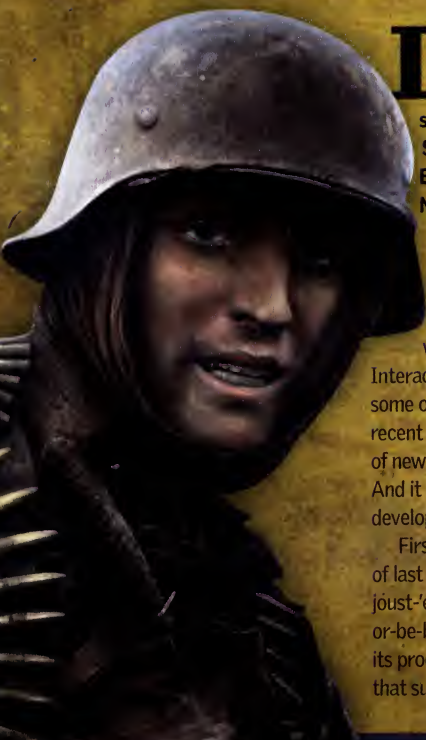
"The Comintern nations can trade goods with their allies instead of buying the goods like other nations have to. They can only do this with other members of the Comintern, of course, so



Cem Cimenbicer
Producer, *Mount&Blade*



Johan Andersson
Producer, *Hearts of Iron 3*



Hearts of Iron 3 doesn't give exciting screenshots.

HOT



See?

SCREENSHOT



"One of the sleeper hits of last year: *Mount&Blade*"

A mount, but no blade.

Pointy.

"I'll just grab a beer..."

The AD 1257 at Kempton.

Affordable housing is at a premium in *Majesty 2*.

they'd have to spend money when trading with Britain, for example. The Axis fights better on their home turf and when engaged in combat on areas of land they have a claim to. They can also declare limited wars, which means they don't have to drag in their allies, like Italy, when invading Albania."

HEX EDUCATION

Up next were two games from Ino-Co (ino-co.com): *Majesty 2: The Fantasy Kingdom Sim* and *Elven Legacy*.

The first is a sequel to the unknown RTS *Majesty*, which used something called indirect control. "Indirect control means you can't select units or tell them where to go or what to do, but you can build buildings and hire heroes, invent new skills, research spells, armour and weapon upgrades, follow heroes around and see how they are gaining experience," explained Alexey Kozyrev, *Majesty 2*'s producer.

"You can also put rewards on different things to attract the attention of heroes, and you can research spells or things like that in guilds, which heroes can then buy or use."

Elven Legacy is a traditional, high-fantasy game, using a hex-based strategy system: "We knew we wanted to make a hex-based game and one of our inspirations was Strategic Simulations' *Fantasy General*, which is around 13 years old now," said game designer Maxim Bodrikov.

"We decided it would be great to make this sort of game available to modern players. After all, hexagonal turn-based systems offer a lot of scope for tactics and strategy." **PC7**

"Hexagonal turn-based systems offer a lot of scope for tactics and strategy"

Swedish Horrors

Frictional Games' Thomas Grip talks *Penumbra*, terror tactics and the future

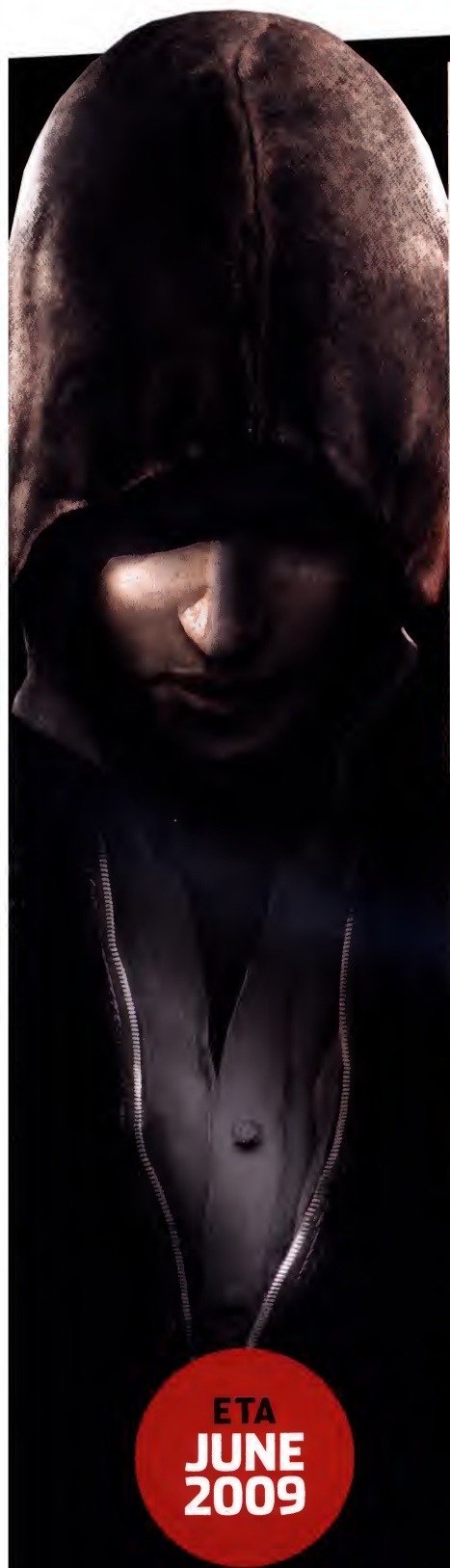
Penumbra is genuinely unnerving.

"*Penumbra* is a unique kind of game, there's no other game like it. It uses physics for puzzles like no other game does, you have all this physical interaction.

"One of the things we were thinking about in development was to figure out how not to drive events, like normally in games you would have developers thinking 'Right, now we have an event, we have something happening that's going to frighten the player'. But instead what we wanted to have was a frightening situation, we tried to put ourselves in the player's shoes, sort of like: 'What would make the player feel frightened at this moment?' That's really what we were after.

"Our next project will be set in the 18th century, a time period that hasn't really been used in games, so we could have stuff like flintlock guns, where you have to reload for about five minutes. Also, it'll come with this big chunky physics stuff. Now you can have big chunky metal objects that you can turn, big levers, thick wooden doors, it just fits the physics engine very well."

I refuse to make the obvious jokes.



ETA
**JUNE
2009**

THE LOWDOWN

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Rollicking good fun | ✓ |
| Explosive, powerful action | ✓ |
| Wonderfully fluid controls | ✓ |
| Sprawling upgrade system | ✓ |
| A one-trick pony? | ✗ |



Though you'll rarely need to, you can pick up and use machine guns.

ONE OF A KIND...

PROTOTYPE

Steve Hogarty checks out the re-birth of the free-roamer

DEVELOPER Radical Entertainment PUBLISHER Activision [WEBSITE prototypegame.com](http://prototypegame.com)

KELLY ZMAK, PRESIDENT of Radical, is a cool guy. "Zmak," he laughs, pumping his fist, "like a punch in the face!" The man is rarely seen without a Stetson and has the look of a weathered Mark Wahlberg about him, and when he's not smiling he looks like he's about to kill you. "Kelly, like a girl?" would be the last thing you'd ever say.

Moments ago I'd been slicing commuters in half with my mutated claw-hands, sprinting up the sides of skyscrapers and suplexing tanks with impunity. *Prototype's* improved a great deal since our first look way back in April of 2008, and Zmak explains how.

"Making *Prototype* is this wonderful blend of technology and artistry, trying to make these two pieces come together," explains Zmak. "One of the enhancements we've seen over the last five months is our particle effects, our lighting tools and technology. Our shader technology has come alive, and so you've seen the visuals improve with regards to that. But the other thing that has come together is how that blends

with this city that's alive. The population and the cars and the density and the explosions, just the chaos that's there, all of these pieces have come together."

IT'S A ZMAKDOWN

Prototype's an open-world action/adventure set in Manhattan. You play Alex Mercer, an amnesiac, runaway, shapeshifting experiment-gone-horribly-right with beastly powers. Your job is to use your strengths to discover your past and (optionally) quell an uprising of outraged mutants and civil unrest. Top of the agenda is making sure the player feels like an unstoppable force of nature, and this is achieved through the fluidity of movement: sprint down Broadway and you'll pounce along cars like stepping stones, wall run along the sides of trucks, bound over buildings and scale some of the tallest structures in the world.

The city is a playground split between

three groups. The army, who'll kill you; the mutants, who'll also kill you; and the civilians, who won't. Where these groups' territories clash (and frontlines will be redrawn throughout the game), things will explode, tanks will decimate surroundings, and marauding beasts will tear fragile human bodies in twain.

"We make no apology for the carnage," laughs Zmak, "it was really one of the driving goals. *Prototype* is an action game in an open-world setting. We're really excited where it's come to, and we're really thankful we've had the time. We've made a lot of mistakes along the way – I think they're the right kinda mistakes though, things that didn't work."

Jumping over barriers, while dangerous, isn't strictly parkour.





Prototypical

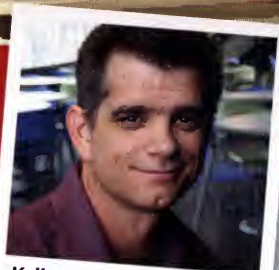
Kelly Zmak, president at Radical, talks us through *Prototype*'s events...

"There are a number of different categories of event. There's Locomotion; this is jacking a vehicle, where you take a vehicle in a combat zone. There's the Web of Intrigue, targets where you're going and finding Web of Intrigue nodes throughout the city. So each of those event types lead to a different type of experience.

"In one event, Locomotion, you might actually be moving from A to B to C, not too dissimilarly than you've seen in some other products. Your success in moving through that environment is what actually brings you the reward.

appearance of a soldier and duck around a corner until things calm down a bit. Events are sprinkled liberally throughout the city, some offering kill frenzy side missions, others progressing the story, and all offering Evolution Points which can be used to upgrade Mercer's mutant abilities.

What Radical are calling the Web of Intrigue will help deliver the storyline. Absorb the memories of some key figure in your past and you'll unlock



Kelly Zmak
President of Radical

"In another one of those, we give you a grenade launcher with unlimited ammo for two minutes, and the infected come at you. You've two minutes to try to take this chaos out, but you're running-and-gunning and you're on your feet, so it's a different experience to being in a tank or a chopper."

The army will fight with the infected, which you can use to your advantage.

Zmak is talking about the stealth system we reported on last year. While you can still assume the guise of military personnel and other regular Joes, you'll no longer use such abilities to infiltrate bases and other areas of the game. "The problem was it was boring," claims Zmak, speaking with refreshing frankness, "and it just didn't work well. So that challenge of letting go of that which doesn't work is an important part of design. It's an important part of the game creation process, in that you might be married to it emotionally, that doesn't make it fun, doesn't make it good."

Instead the ability to disguise yourself will be used to lower the intensity levels of the game – when the military have worked up a right old sweat trying to skewer you with missiles, you just absorb the

"Dancing at the front of the stage like some petulant, over-confident child is the sheer destruction on show"

short mini-clips detailing your history.

In doing this you also identify one or more characters affiliated with the memory you've absorbed, and those people are then made available for you to track down. There are hundreds of these memories scattered about the city, and collecting them all will still leave some elements of your origin a mystery.

But dancing at the front of the stage like some petulant, over-confident child is the sheer destruction on show. You can bodyslam tanks, which crumple and explode beneath you. You can pick up taxis, and run up buildings with them before chucking them at helicopters.



Yum, fleshy.

You can leap onto the helicopters and hijack them in mid-air. Or even morph your forearms into hammerfists and punch a man to the moon. You're a walking superpower, a hoodie-wearing anti-hero with a penchant for absolute carnage. An ASBO waiting to happen.

My interview over, I left Zmak pumping his fist triumphantly to nobody in particular. I never asked what it was like being Kelly Zmak, but I imagine it feels a lot like being Alex Mercer in *Prototype*: intensely entertaining, immediately gratifying, and constant, unerring fun. **PCZ**

FEBRUARY 6-8, 2009**NEW YORK
COMIC CON
NO.4****Steve Hogarty gets in over his head at 2009's New York Comic Con**

WHILE ROSS KEMP is hanging out in Afghanistan dodging mortar fire and watching men die in one of the most embittered and pointless modern conflicts on the planet, I've instead opted to report on the New York Comic Convention (NYCC to its friends). That's further away than the Middle East (I think), it's much colder in New York at this time of year, and I didn't get to spend as much time lazing about on my stomach shielding myself from rubble as Kemp did. And everybody knows jetlag is worse when you travel west. Clearly, I'm getting a raw deal.

This was my first comic convention, and as such my expectations were based on that episode of *The Simpsons* and some funny photographs I saw on the internet of hefty gents spilling out of *Sailor Moon* costumes. It's easy to ridicule when you're on the vaguely respectable side of a two-way mirror of nerdiness. Comics have never had a breakthrough to the mainstream in the same ways videogames have, but gamers and comic fans are all of the same geek blood. If anything, the impermeable surface tension of acceptance coupled with the massive swell of popularity and cash sloshing around in the comic book industry have kept these giant cons feeling cosy and community focused.

I was here for games, technically. According to the press release there was a 50% increase in the number of game publishers attending this year's NYCC, and it certainly seemed that way. About half of the gargantuan convention hall was set aside for small private stalls, from traders proudly displaying \$500 first issues to folks selling Iron Man busts



Steve's in there somewhere...

and Master Chief figurines. The rest was occupied by the biggies, EA and Ubisoft wrestled for floor space, while big-name comic publishers, like Dark Horse, routinely shovelled prizes and gifts into the grasping hands of fans.

Ubisoft were pushing *HAWX* on the punters, offering me a chance to play the air combat epic using the hilarious new Gyroxus controller – a full-motion, tilting, spinning chair which effectively replaces the left thumbstick of a gamepad. The pad sits between your legs like a fighter jet joystick, and by tugging the entire thing left and right, you tilt the chair and fly the plane. It's hard work on the old shoulders, and I think I had more fun

spinning about during the loading screen than I did in the game itself, but it's an interesting (if stupid) idea all the same.

Soon after that my pointless wandering was interrupted by a man from some God-forsaken free-to-play German online strategy fantasy shitepile. It was a game I'd heard of before and duly ignored, and by the time he'd hurled his spiel at me I was too embarrassed to admit I write for a PC games magazine. So I stood and nodded, and waited for five minutes before I could slink away.

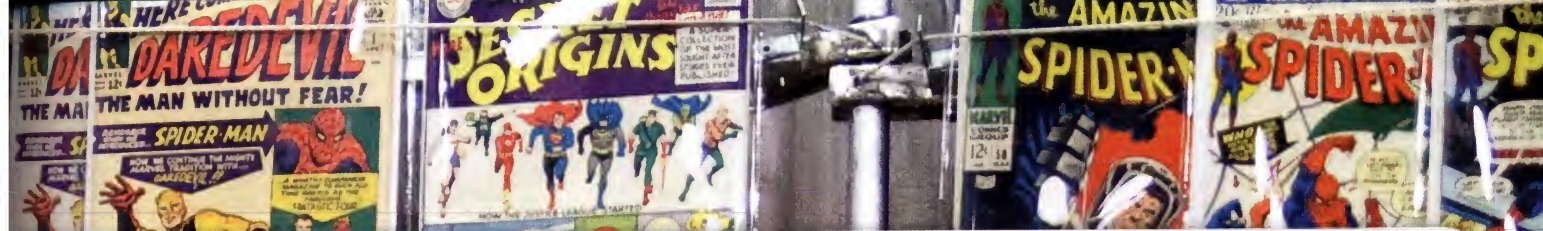
I did this a few times, for a few other terrible games, before I happened upon DICE's incredible new *Battlefield 1943: Pacific*. We've a fuller, more wholesome preview on page 34, but first impressions are fantastic – it's got an immediate smack of *Battlefield 1942* about it, and while EA are falling over themselves to tell us it's not a remake, it really does feel

like a return to roots for the series, albeit one of a casual, instant-action variety.

Feeling my duties on the gaming front were fulfilled, I roamed the floor in search of comics, entrenched in my own naivety. A bald man rolled his eyes when he saw me buying a copy of *The Amazing Spider-Man* with Barack Obama on the front. Another sighed when I laughed at Namor the Sub-Mariner. And a gaggle of men collapsed when I exclaimed, "They have *X-Men* comics now!" To be honest I only said that to wind them up. They're a lovely bunch, these comic book guys, and you have to be some kind of heartless dick to condemn them. As I left, I felt the people at that convention were kindred.

Except that fat dude whose arse bulged through the back of a chair like a giant Play-Doh factory. I'll have nothing to do with him. **PH**

"Feeling my duties on the gaming front were fulfilled, I roamed the floor in search of comics"



Fusion Fall is big business... apparently.



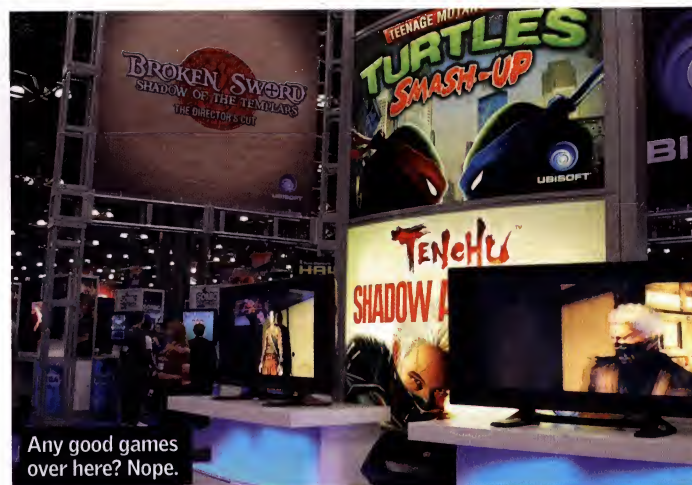
They've got those strange Nintendo things here too.



Gyroxus chair...



ACTIVATE!



Any good games over here? Nope.

Caped crusaders

The costumed heroes of NYCC



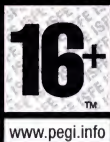
Comic enthusiasts just can't resist creating homemade outfits and dressing up as their favourite characters. Some of them are absolutely excellent though - like this bloke dressed as Riddick, that Venkman behind Steve, or that chap dressed up as Prince Nuada from *Hellboy II* on the left. But some of them are a bit naff, like this Batman chap. Let's all look at the Batman chap and have a good think about how our lives are going so far.

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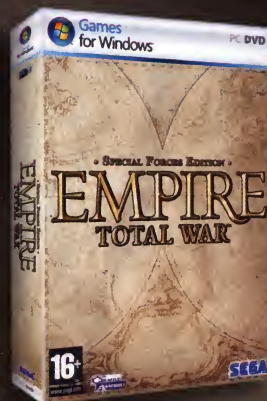


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Games for Windows

FIRST OF ITS KIND...

THE HISTORY OF EVERQUEST

To celebrate 10 years of *EverQuest*, join **Ed Zitron** and his guests *EQ*'s ex-technical director **Scott Hartsman** and current lead designer **Ryan Barker**

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER Sony Online Entertainment

THERE ARE PLENTY of people out there who will hark back to their days of playing *Doom*, *Hexen* and *Duke Nukem 3D*. These titles were popular, and thus get cited as the precursors to modern-day hits like *Crysis*, *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* and the like. However, when it comes to MMOs, many consider *World of Warcraft* the first in its genre. But it was *EverQuest* that established the entire MMO industry and one of the most lucrative genres in gaming, and creating thousands of gaming addicts.

"For nearly a decade prior [to *EQ*'s release], analysts had been saying that 'The online games industry is set to make x billion dollars per year any day now!' It wasn't until *EQ* when that actually came true. It was the first time that MMOs started to get taken seriously as a new type of business opportunity," nods Scott Hartsman, former technical lead on *EQ*.

GENESIS

EverQuest started in 1999, with Brad McQuaid, Steve Clover and Bill Trost. With 989 Studios (a division of Sony

better known for making PlayStation sports games and later broke away from Sony to form Verant Interactive) they created the first iteration of *EverQuest* – essentially a 3D multi-user dungeon. Prior to this MUDs were essentially large chat rooms for people to pretend to be wizards in, but *EQ* took this concept a stage further by adding classes, and plopping people in a huge world to roam and level up in.

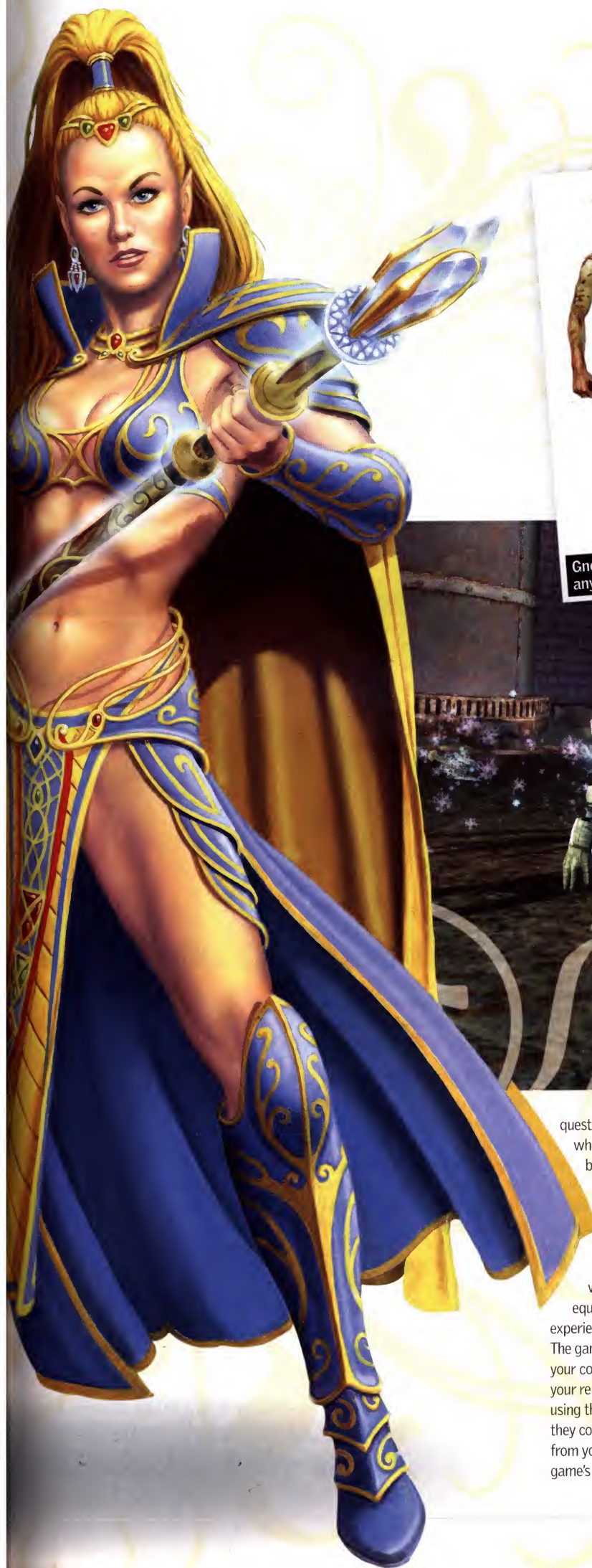
Simple as it sounds, that was very much it when *EQ* was founded. There were quests – probably something in the region of 40 in the entire game's first year or so – but for the most part you were left to your own devices.

In fact, it's hard to describe *EQ* in the terms of modern MMOs. While MMO titles, both popular and otherwise, give clear structure and lead the player towards goals, *EQ* was a sandbox escapade. You had no map, no

Lemmy takes time out from Motörhead to be a raid boss in the Plane of Time.



Nobody likes gryphons. They're fantasy chickens.



These things are about a foot tall in-game.



Gnomes can make anything look stupid.



"Really, these orange flames make me hit faster."

quest logger, and nobody to tell you where to go. And that was only the beginning of its problems.

In *World of Warcraft* when you die, you appear outside of your body and run happily back to your corpse. For the first year of *EQ*, your death would leave every bit of equipment on your corpse, lose you experience, and possibly de-level you. The game also allowed someone to drag your corpse (essentially, summoning your remains to them by repeatedly using the /corpse console command) so they could loot any and all of your gear from your body. On top of this, the game's initial learning curve was akin to

a vertical cliff coated with broken glass, yet *EQ* had a real charm.

You see, this was far before quest databases like Thottbot (thottbot.com) and forums would spoil things. Much of the content of the original game – and even expansions like *The Ruins of Kunark* and *Scars of Velious* – remained mysteries for months. This was in part due to many of the original quests being broken or simply incomplete, but due to *EQ*'s structure, there was much that had to be found by trial and error. Quests were found by hailing (pressing H) particular NPCs, reading their responses, and typing words in the hopes you would trigger quests. Ultimately, this means that there



Mountain Dew burns most enemies alive.

There are still many unsolved quests – such as the Sphinxes in the Rathe Mountains, and much of the original game – that may not be unsolvable.

The inherent structure of the game – kill things, level up, get better gear, group up with friends to kill bigger things, etc – is where *WOW* and its ilk took its inspiration. The difference with *EQ* was the freeform content, and lack of hand-holding. While the game was given more structure in the form of obvious

progression, with most expansions adding more levels, and areas to level in them – there was little attempt to fill gaps with a narrative. As Hartsman puts it, "Once you got to a particular level (say, 40) there was little to no advancement to be had outside of being in a group, in a dungeon. This was the older-school, hardcore concept of forced grouping."

EverQuest, weirdly enough, was actually a highly social experience. Each server was one dynamic environment made up of different zones, with everyone going for the same content. "People were forced to socialise if they wanted to continue, given ample blank spaces to fill with their own chat. The connections you made with friends in *EQ* were unparalleled at that time, at that scale," reminisces Hartsman. "Everything



Annie Lennox looks well.

you would want to do was shared with other players. You had to earn the right to play the game."

FOR INSTANCE

As the expansions progressed, a skeleton plotline emerged – dragons that hated each other, gods that hated each other, lizardmen that hated you, and frogs and trolls that were at war. There was little to it so players would fill the void with social gaming. Where there was no guide, no point per se, so instead strong friendships grew, creating a huge social experiment and mass addiction, coining the term "EverCrack".

While this addiction and social gaming was something that *EQ* propagated, one of the enduring parts of the industry – instancing – was very much an original invention.

Ryan Barker, *EQ*'s current lead designer, considered it a landmark: "I think the one of the biggest changes

we saw was the addition of instancing with the *Lost Dungeons of Norrath* expansion pack. The social implications of having the world dynamically expand were enormous, and it's really become a staple of the genre since then."

To the layman, instancing involved sectioning off little pockets of *EQ*'s world allowing a player to complete a quest, while preventing others from having to wait for hours for the main foe or NPC to respawn, or arguing with each other over who deserves the reward at the end of the mission. This may not seem a big deal, but almost every major MMO since has used them – *World of Warcraft*, *Lord of the Rings Online* and *Lineage 2* being prime examples.

What *EQ* became was very much a product of years of changes, though. Each patch would tweak zones, classes and experiment with the game's world. As it was effectively the first at what it was doing, Sony Online Entertainment

"Gah! I hate portraits!"



"And I hate my hooked hand!"



Community Knocks

EverQuest has the rowdiest fans in internet history

While *World of Warcraft*'s average player is much younger – due to the game being accessible to novice gamers – *EverQuest* was made up of a contingent of old never-do-wells who were capable of arguing both with themselves and the powers that be.

Players would actively grief each other by attacking groups of monsters and running into their enemies – dying in the process, but leaving the angry mob to mop up their target. Guilds would race savagely towards certain raid targets that would spawn once a week, leaving certain guild members to spot when the creature spawned and sound the call.

"The housekeeping that it took to do raids back then (*Excel* spreadsheets of who's in which groups for example) was just nuts," shudders Scott Hartsman.

A great example was a quest for a particularly powerful weapon that involved waiting for a dragon to spawn and killing it. However, the dragon spawned at random at any time between 24 hours or two weeks of its last death, in any part of the Skyfire Mountains. This led to people waiting for days in a row, only to be

steamrolled by an guild of loot-mongers, whose scouts had given them a heads-up of the lizard's reappearance.

Players also gained notoriety for writing, at great length, what Verant (and eventually SOE) was doing wrong with the game. Two such loudmouths were Furor (Alex Afrasiabi) and Tigole (Jeff Kaplan). Both later worked on *WOW*, with Kaplan becoming the MMO's lead designer.

As leaders of two of the biggest guilds in *EverQuest* they commanded a lot of respect – and ears – and thus were able to grandstand about broken content, most of which was reserved for the endgame which they would get to quickly, through committing upwards of 15 hours a day to the game.

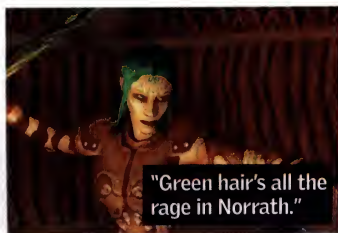
The most famous of these was when Furor threatened to quit the game, and (ironically) turn his guild's website Fires of Heaven (fohguild.org) into the world's first *WOW* fansite, if bugs in the quest Plane of Time were not fixed. A few months later he hadn't quit, but he had posted lengthy *WOW* fan fiction.



How Ed wasted five years of his life.



Part tree. Part shrub. All man.



"Green hair's all the rage in Norrath."

(SOE) would make changes that would send thousands of people into fits of internet rage. All the same, it made the game a remarkably different beast – albeit with few big changes.

"It's really hard to zero in on just a few main changes that *EverQuest* has gone through. Many times it's not just one specific change, but a number of smaller changes that eventually build into a much larger one," agrees Barker.

In fact, Blizzard's blockbuster has brought on a lot of changes in *EQ*. As subscriptions, and so the number of players, dwindled (by how much, SOE won't say) *EQ* has had to take on many of *WOW*'s facets. These include, but aren't limited to, full-on quests, storylines, easier solo play, as well as easing up on the brutal level and learning curves of old.

"The genre as a whole has become a lot more user friendly and less time-

intensive then it used to be. When *EQ* was first released it was not uncommon to spend several hours just waiting for a specific rare NPC to spawn to get a rare item. Nowadays the content is broken up into much more manageable periods of time that can accommodate shorter play sessions," muses Barker.

BE MY QUEST

As *EQ* winds down – and one can't deny that it's approaching its end after 10 years – I can only imagine it will have to assimilate more and more of *World of Warcraft*. Ironically, due to the success of *WOW* and the comparative lack of challenge, *EQ* has had to ease up its unforgiving levelling curve, difficulty, and lack of structure to compete. Many of the charming mysteries of the original game have been solved – including previously unkillable or flat-out missing bosses like Kerafyrn the Sleeper and Mayong



Depressingly, Ed can name this raid boss from memory.

Mistmoore – as a means of keeping the original player base. Some 14 expansions later, and much of the original content has been explained away and bridged with quests, raids, and content that is high-on identical in structure to *WOW*.

This is sad, but necessary. The kind of game that *EverQuest* was – highly experimental; essentially a gigantic several-year-long beta test – could never exist again. The many minds of the industry have got wise to the money to be made, and instant internet communication and forums have made it impossible to get away with the sly trickery of claiming a broken part of the game actually did "work as intended".

All the same, without the thousands of *EverQuest* players who struggled through broken content and content

blocks; who put their heads together to discover the buried quests; and who did their best to create gigantic, tight communities within, and outside of, the game, there would never be an MMO genre or industry.

Hartsman remains a social gamer, though: "I know it sounds cheesy, but it's the truth. I got into playing and making games because I like people, and MMOs let me meet great ones on both sides of the screen."

There will never be a more social MMO than *EverQuest*. In fact, there will never be another computer game like it. Barker, naturally, attributes this all to the subscribers. "We love *EverQuest* and the community that it's created. Without the community we really wouldn't be here at our 10th anniversary." **PCZ**

"There will never be a more social MMO than *EverQuest*. In fact, there will never be another game like it"



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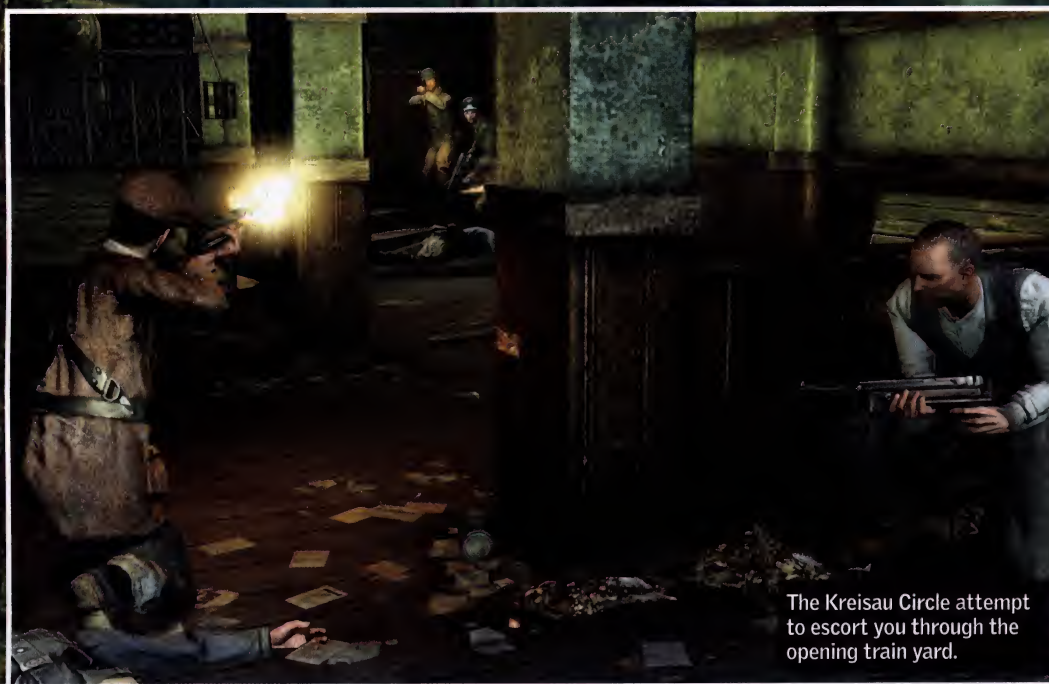


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BARK AT THE MOON...

WOLFENSTEIN

"Epic Veil!" shouts a green-tinged Steve HogartyDEVELOPER Raven PUBLISHER Activision WEBSITE wolfenstein.com

The Kreisau Circle attempt to escort you through the opening train yard.

ETA
**SPRING
2009**

FIVE YEARS AGO people would openly mock you for using "Google" as a verb. Five years before that, you'd have your teeth kicked in for using "email" as a verb. And before hit 2001 single *Party Hard* was released, the word "party" was rigidly considered a noun in most civilised social circles. Now we've got a new doing word courtesy of Raven: "Wolfenstein", meaning to take regular World War II history and skew it in a hugely entertaining, highly embellished and occult-twisted way. You might as well tear up the dictionary now.

Our trip to Raven's snowbound studio in Wisconsin gave an insight into how "Wolfensteining" is achieved: scanners are used to, and this is no joke, turn genuine Nazi trousers into 3D models – apparently to get the creases "just right". Once the entire uniform is downloaded and turned into a workable model, they use it to dress a skeletal-faced Third Reich hellfiend. Authenticity still means a lot to Raven, despite absolutely everything you see on these pages.

SPYING GAME

Before I'm ushered into a dimly lit room to play one of *Wolfenstein's* opening levels, I'm presented with the game's introduction cinematic. This movie is spectacular enough to warrant its own appraisal. It's night on a German aircraft carrier, some panicked sailors rush up behind a man standing on deck. He wears a long captain's jacket, and is staring wistfully at the moonlit horizon. "General!" yelps one of the crewmen

in a bad German accent, "Ve believe zer iz a spy on board! Should ve delay ze missile launch on London?"

The camera pans back to the supposed General. He turns around to face the sailors – it's 'BJ' Blazkowicz! The hero of the game! The General was the spy all along! Shocker! Before they can register their surprise, the sailors are shot dead. Anti-aircraft guns turn on BJ as he ducks behind crates and does magnificent cartwheels about the place. Finally cornered, he reaches into the pocket of his stolen jacket and pulls out a medallion, the mysterious centrepiece of the game – it explodes with light, and the Nazis are seared to death by occult energy.

You should now be getting a measure of exactly how shamelessly

ridiculous *Wolfenstein* is. If you're still not convinced, here's how things carry on: having killed most of the Nazis, BJ hijacks a Stuka bomber and flies it to safety. Behind him, the carrier explodes for no discernible reason, and thus the incredible, unbelievable adventure begins. *Wolfenstein* is, as it's always been, an insidious mix of science-fiction and history. Real-world weapons sit comfortably alongside ray guns and an alternate dimension is casually layered atop our own. This dimension is called the Veil, and from a certain point in the game onwards it can be entered into at any time at the push of a button. In spite of these off-kilter leanings, the game opens in a straightforward manner.

Wolfenstein's first scenes begin with you emerging from a train car to meet a member of the Kreisau Circle (who are themselves Wolfensteined into a gun-toting Resistance group, rather than the mundane, politically focused reality). A jaunt through some sewers brings you to a military train yard, a place jammed with swastikas, sandbags and mysterious tankers. You're handed an MP40 and some grenades, and what follows is

"Wolfenstein is, as it's always been, an insidious mix of science-fiction and history"

THE LOWDOWN

As barmy as *Wolfenstein* games have ever been



Veil effects look great



Explorable city



WWII bits are very dull




Bullet-time



Mounted machine guns





This is how the Third Reich appear through the Veil – all green and glowy-eyed.

a fairly solid, if by-the-books, shooting experience.

SWASTIKA MASALA

Wolfenstein is, on the face of things, a very decent WWII shooter. The trappings of Bavarian architecture, train yards, cobblestones and chateaus reek of early *Call of Duty* games – certainly a benchmark worth aspiring some years ago, but hardly something even approaching revolutionary today. At this point, the ability to slip into the Veil dimension hasn't yet been revealed and the game plays out with a worryingly straight, trope-ridden face.

What we've seen of *Wolfenstein's* non-occult stuff is plain and unremarkable. id's *Tech 4* engine has failed to afford the title any real graphical distinction, while the art style ploughs the same ragged WWII furrows we've seen time and time again in other shooters.

Mounted guns summon waves of enemies, glowing



Multiplayer

Here's what we don't know

Return to Castle Wolfenstein had a huge asset in its multiplayer mode, and to this day it's still being played by diehard fans. Right now Raven are only ready to let out a single fact about the new *Wolfenstein's* multiplayer mode: "We know how big the multiplayer was in *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*," claims Peter Sokal, community manager at id Software, "and if you're a fan of the multiplayer from that you'll feel at home in the multiplayer in this game. Also, we're going to be incorporating the Veil into the multiplayer, so it's gonna have a lot of cool elements in it."

Scanning in the details

Wolfenstein may be fantasy, but the clothing will be real

Raven have used 3D scanners to recreate clothes and equipment, and even 'BJ' Blazkowicz's hands. How this works is fairly simple.

The scanner fires a laser beam at the object being scanned, and this is seen by a camera. The laser gun, camera and the dot of laser light form a triangle. The distance between the camera and the laser emitter – one side of the triangle – is known, as is the laser beam's angle. And the angle from the dot to the camera is calculated.

Using this data – one length, and two angles – the scanner can work out the distance from the camera and the laser emitter to the dot (the triangle's other sides), and so the dot's position in space. This is repeated a billion times until a pair of Nazi trousers are rendered in 3D.



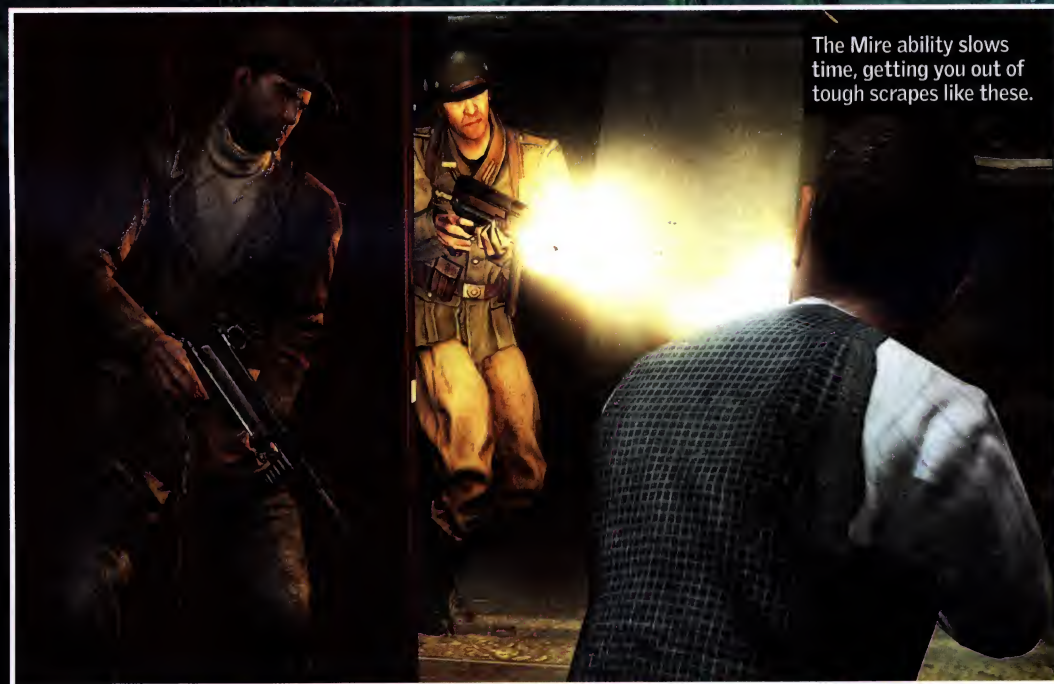
transparent yellow boxes invite you to stick dynamite on doors, a compass guides you from one room to the next, and AI allies dawdle about meaninglessly as you one-man army your way through the Nazi ranks.

VEILED THREAT

This was going to be the bit where I stop and gibber on about how the Veil – that wacky paranormal twist – rescues the rest of the game from mediocrity. But it's worth first pointing out that *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* had similar occult leanings, and its realistic bits didn't need bolstering by anything especially strange. In fact, a lot of people would argue that the zombie bits detracted from the experience.

Wolfenstein, however, is definitely in need of some backbone, and the Veil is Raven's attempt at inserting some spine into proceedings. Your first encounter with this world comes about when one of the train yard's mysterious tankers erupts in a shower of blue flame – gravity takes a well-deserved break as unfettered Veil energy causes debris, guns, bodies living and dead, to float upwards towards the train yard's ceiling. Panicking Nazi soldiers fire madly in all directions, their attention rightly turning from you to being suspended 20ft above the floor. You, though, remain safely on the ground.

Naturally, I began to wonder what it would look like if a floating Nazi were to be shot in the stomach



The Mire ability slows time, getting you out of tough scrapes like these.

in such an environment. So I tried it, and it's satisfyingly punchy. The floaty blokey doubles up in pain and wheels gently and helplessly towards the far wall. The zero-G effect is only temporary, and in a matter of seconds all and sundry fall back to Earth with a thud and a clatter. It's not long until another tanker explodes and you're surrounded by even more sky-bound bigots. This time I used the opportunity to hurl a stick grenade at the flailing soldiers with comical effect, as their limp corpses were violently punted hither and thither.

In celebration, I nudged a floating cash register with the butt of my MP40 and watched it gently tumble through space – the zero-gravity stuff is a really pleasing effect.

TWILIGHT ZONE

Exactly what the Veil is hasn't been properly clarified yet, and may never be. At times it's an energy, a substance, a dimension, a philosophy, and in some cases it's ammunition. Once you've unlocked the medallion's abilities (the medallion itself acts as a sort of conduit for Veil energy, if

you're keeping notes), it appears as a meter in the bottom left corner of the screen, and using your Veil abilities depletes your reserves.

Another level is fired up, this time we're in the streets of *Wolfenstein's* fictional city, fighting our way towards a Nazi-controlled church which is spewing a pillar of filthy green energy into the sky. I'm now in full control of my Veil powers, and can at any point flip between dimensions. I've also unlocked one of my Veil abilities, Mire, which slows time to a crawl

THE STORY SO FAR...
WOLFENSTEIN



BASIC NAZIS!
Wolfenstein first appeared in this very early stealthier.



3D NAZIS!
BJ Blazkowicz appears, and the FPS genre is born.



SOD-ING NAZIS!
A few months later, BJ returned in *Spear of Destiny*.

VEILED NAZIS!
Seventeen years on, BJ returns to kill Nazis in another dimension.

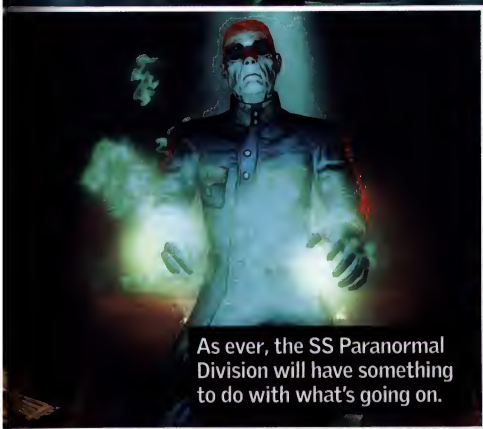
1984

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1992

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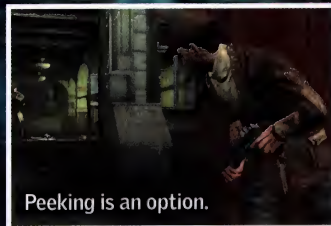
"AI allies dawdle as you one-man army your way through the Nazi ranks"



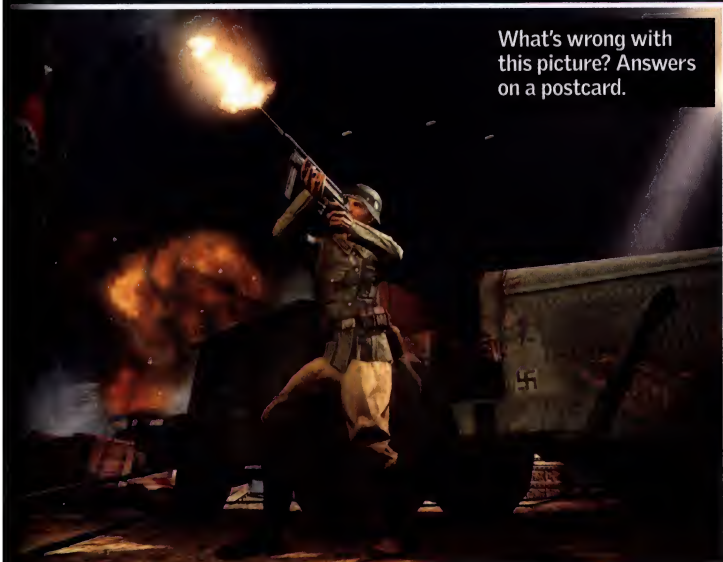
As ever, the SS Paranormal Division will have something to do with what's going on.



Electric fingers!



Peeking is an option.



What's wrong with this picture? Answers on a postcard.



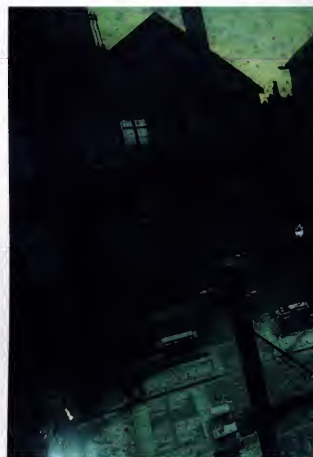
Dodgy paving will distract enemy troops.

Head into the Veil

Take a tour of *Wolfenstein's* other dimension

HOLE-Y MOLEY

Holes can appear in the Veil where walls exist in reality. While enemy soldiers can see you while you're in the Veil, they can't see through the wall that still exists in their dimension. But you can leap through the hole and shoot them.



ENERGY POOLS

These pools of glowing light contain Veil energy. Stand in them to recharge your medallion. Collectors, those alien blobs who float in the Veil, gorge at these pools, becoming larger as they do. Shoot them to release their stored energy.



HIGH ROAD

Rooftops are known as "Angel's pathways" or "Jesus' strollin' patch" because they're awesome places to walk on. *Wolfenstein's* rooftops are open to explore, and are riddled with secrets and treasure.



LOW ROAD

While *Wolfenstein* offers varying routes through the town, there's always the option of ploughing right down the middle. Use Mire to slow time and avoid being peppered with bullets, and drop into the Veil to scout for enemies.

and allows me to dance between sluggish enemies. If you like, you can call it bullet-time and be done with it.

The effect of dimension hopping isn't unlike slipping into night vision mode in *Splinter Cell*, or putting on a pair of 3D glasses while driving. The screen is tinted a deep, dark green, elements of the environment change shape, and the sky transforms into a tumultuous expanse of swirling

"Reality is further unhinged by the appearance of Nazi superweapons"

carnage and destruction. You move faster in the Veil, enemies are highlighted and so easier to spot, and critical objects such as exploding barrels are painted a stark red.

Odd alien creatures called Collectors also float aimlessly about the world, invisible to all but you. They drink from pools of Veil energy like a sort of delicious occult milkshake. Shoot them and they erupt like fleshy exploding barrels, electrocuting foes in the real world.

And so, by flipping things between normal and green and occasionally slowing things down, I made my way from one end of a heavily defended road to the other. *Wolfenstein's* levels are semi-open ended, offering various routes to your objective. In this case I could've forced my way through the middle – the most direct route – by relying heavily on my Mire ability to avoid being turned into a fine red mist

by racists' bullets. Instead I crept along the building fronts, at times clambering along rooftops to get the jump on unsuspecting tyrants below. Certain walls, marked by a Black Sun logo, don't exist inside the Veil, so by flipping into that magical dimension I could often saunter through solid brick and properly surprise a bunch of devious huns.

Raven promise that this open-endedness will appear throughout the game, and that parts of the city will

be open to exploration at any time. They're quick to assure, however, that this isn't an open-world, free-roaming city, but that at the same time it won't be as linear as old *Wolfenstein's*.

As is tradition for the series, Nazi treasure can be found stashed throughout the world, and this treasure can now be used to purchase upgrades on the black market. Your MP40, for example, can be fitted with a silencer for stealth, improved rifling for accuracy and a drum magazine for more ammunition. Veil powers can be purchased here too, though Mire is still the only ability Raven are willing to talk about. These marketplaces are physical locations in the world – one a straightforward black market front, the other only available inside the Veil, a mystical outlet of craziness known as the Golden Dawn.

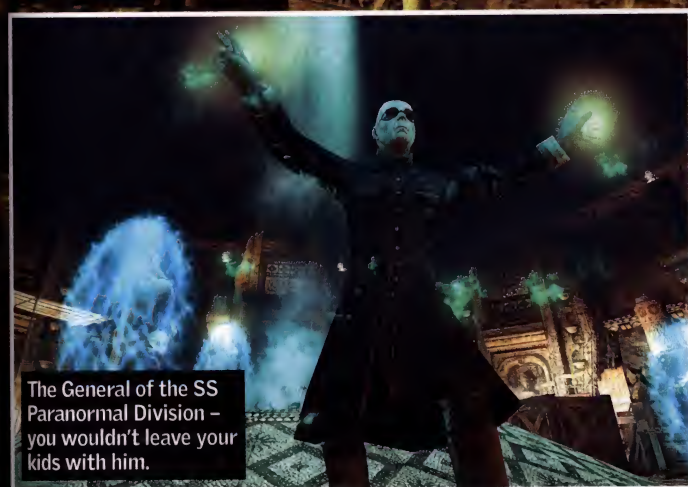
Reality is further unhinged by the appearance of the Nazi's Veil-powered superweapons. Heavy Troopers are armoured soldiers wielding powerful particle cannons and capable of sending out explosive shock waves – they also have a penchant for



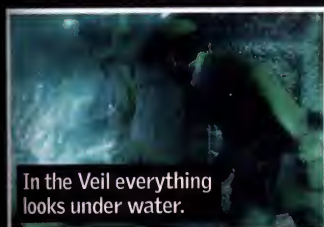
bursting through walls when you least expect. By slipping into the Veil I was able to highlight their weak points – sparkling transistors rather helpfully placed on their shoulders. Dodging the vintage automobiles being hurled about the place by the Heavy Trooper's particle cannon, I popped his shoulder pads and brought him to his knees.

The particle cannon is a meaty weapon, and *Wolfenstein's* world is built to accommodate its destructive abilities. It tears through wood and turns cover to dust. All Nazis run from you, desperately trying to seek safety as you blast green lightning death in all directions. The Veil might give you an edge in combat, but it never makes you feel overly powerful.

The swastika was a religious symbol, before the Nazis got hold of it.



The General of the SS Paranormal Division – you wouldn't leave your kids with him.



In the Veil everything looks under water.

The particle cannon, on the other hand, transforms you into a sort of Nazi-slaying messiah.

Using this weapon I pushed forward to my final objective – the spire of energy erupting from the ruined church. In the tighter spaces of the church grounds, the defensive abilities of the enemy AI really start to show – they duck behind gravestones and stay low when

under fire. They won't push forward either, as they've nowhere to push forward to. They'll retreat from grenades, and can so be forced into easily compromised positions. On this occasion, I'd effectively herded the enemy into an indefensible corner of the church's facade, managing to take them out before they had a chance to regroup and take up better cover.

Once inside the building the source of the energy was apparent: an oversized desk toy comprised of three massive spinning rings. The entire thing glowed with occult energy, and by jumping into the Veil I could see that each of the rings was host to a conspicuous weak point. Mire slowed the rings down to a crawl, and with a few carefully aimed shots from my



The Veil's a nice place, you'll want to stay there forever.

MP40 the contraption began to spin itself into oblivion, spewing out unfocused Veil energy and generally making a proper old mess.

A zombified Nazi (in an authentic uniform) promptly appeared and tore my face off, which is where the playtest came to an end – just as things were getting interesting.

Raven are still holding a lot of their cards close to their chest, and while

much of the content they've shown so far has us slightly concerned (the warmed-up WWII guff being the main offender), the features they've yet to give us full access to are enticing. The level structure and the exploration, the weapon upgrade systems, and the yet to be revealed Veil powers – there's a lot still to be seen here, and there's even more to be Wolfensteined. **W**

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TURN TO PAGE 102



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PCZONE REVIEWS

Our verdict on the
latest PC games



58 EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR

The historical strategy series arrives
in the age of gunpowder and galleons

To tweet is to live

TWITTER! I NEVER realised what a basically shit human being I am until I began following Stephen Fry's tweets on Twitter. He's filming an episode of *Bones*! He's eating Afghan cuisine! He's trapped in an elevator! He's looking at whales!

Twitter confirms what you've always, privately, suspected: other people's lives are more interesting than yours, and celebrities are much happier than you'll ever be thanks to all that fame and money.

Twitter is good for something else. I got to play *Left 4 Dead* with Graham Linehan, creator of *The IT Crowd* and *Father Ted*. We played through *Dead Air*, and I rescued him from certain zombie death on several occasions.

Now, as far as I can tell, we're best mates, and any minute now he's going to call me up and ask me to help write an amazing new sitcom with him. About our incredible friendship. Thanks, Twitter!

Steve Hogarty

Steve Hogarty
Deputy editor

Must Buys!

PC ZONE Classics are hard to come by, and when you see one you should drop to the floor and refuse to move until someone buys you the game...



The PC ZONE Awards



CLASSIC (90%+)
Games scoring in this bracket are air-punching, heart-soaring triumphs. Buy them.



RECOMMENDED (75-89%)
Head-turning, if not eye-popping, games. But then, who wants their eyes popped?



DUMP (0-19%)
PC ZONE's dirty protest. If a game is bad, we won't shirk our duty.

AND THE REST



ONLINE ONLY
Don't have an internet connection? Then you're wasting your time. Move along please.



EXPANSION PACK
See this and you're going to have to own the original to play the expansion. We know - life's not fair.



ON THE DVD
Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo or movie.

The PC ZONE gaming machine

As you'll see on the many pages of resplendent reviews that follow, we list the minimum specifications you need to play each game in each review. Please refer to the publisher's website to check out their recommended optimum specs that'll make the games super-whizzy. We review all new games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Xworks X81-C2D, (pictured right). For more info on Xworks, tap into the wonder that is the internet and type the following selection of letters into your browser: xworksinteractive.com.



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- 66 **BURNOUT PARADISE: THE ULTIMATE BOX**
- 70 **THE GODFATHER II**
- 72 **CRYSTALIS**
- 73 **BATTLEFORGE**
- 74 **DRAKENSANG: THE DARK AGE**
- 75 **CEVILLE**
- 76 **CODENAME: PANZERS - COLD WAR**
- 76 **STEEL FURY - KHARKOV 1942**
- 77 **GRAND AGES: ROME**
- 77 **SHELLSHOCK 2: BLOOD TRAILS**
- 78 **STATE OF PLAY: THE LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE**
- 80 **BUDGET**
Arx Fatalis, Stronghold Crusader, Painkiller: Black Edition, and Gothic II Gold.
- 82 **BUYER'S GUIDE**

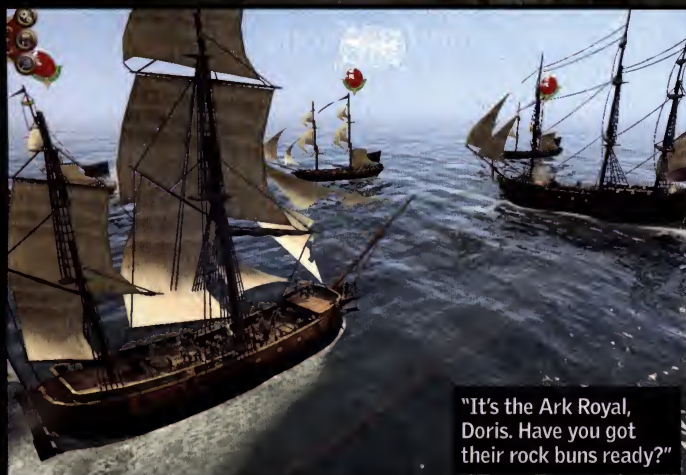
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- To only review code signed off by the publishers and the developers
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- To hang up on companies who say that 79% isn't a good score. What do they know?
- To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at letters@pczone.co.uk



EMPIRE: TOTAL

David Brown dreams of square formations, buxom wenches, hoisting sails, loaded muskets, and grand strategy epics



"It's the Ark Royal, Doris. Have you got their rock buns ready?"

DEVELOPER Creative Assembly
PUBLISHER SEGA
WEBSITE totalwar.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £39.99

AT A GLANCE...

Total War moves into the gunpowder age, taking in a whole lot of naval combat at long last.

Minimum system requirements: 2.6GHz Pentium 4, 1GB RAM (2GB Vista), and a 256MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR 94%

MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR 91%

IMPERIAL GLORY 85%

HAS IT REALLY been nearly a decade since we first watched battlefield monks clash with naginata cavalry in *Shogun: Total War*? So much has changed since then – music has got worse, fashions evolve daily, and Stephen Fry tells us about his life on Twitter – yet here we are, once more preparing to praise an RTS from Creative Assembly.

Empire: Total War is easily the best in the series, primarily because Creative Assembly have addressed issues long-term fans have been having with the games, since the long-past days of geishas and koku.

Empire: Total War sees the series move from medieval Europe to 18th century Europe, and spread into two new spheres of conflict – the Indian subcontinent and North America – plus

four new trade zones (see 'Trade me up, Scotty'). For the first time, a *Total War* game is a truly global concern, with a huge map and a far larger number of nations to deal with. Now it's entirely possible for the Indian Maratha Empire to be fighting for dominance in the Americas, if you wanted to take history in that direction.

WATERY ENDS

The sea will play a major factor too. In other *Total War* games, you could ignore the sea until an AI opponent blockaded your ports. Now you'll be managing trade lanes and protecting your merchant ships from dastardly pirate raiders. And, of course, you'll be fighting there too. Gone are the boring auto resolved naval battles of previous *TWs*, replaced with beautifully-rendered seascapes and the splintering crash of cannonballs shattering oaken hulls. With this new freedom to fight on the seas comes a raft of new skills and tactics to learn. Thankfully, CA haven't gone down the let's-make-everything-hardcore route with the naval combat, but even so, you'll be learning a lot in each battle you play.

For the first time in a long time this is also true in the land battles, which have shifted their focus from the spear to the musket. Although there are still remnants of that old-style combat in here (like cavalry charges, for example), generally you'll be fighting from a distance. *Empire's* land battles are, in fact, a curious mix of using tried-and-

In the eye of the beholder

How *Empire* looks great but doesn't melt your graphics card

Empire looks great, even on low and medium settings. Although it isn't the quantum leap in visuals that *Medieval II* was from *Rome*, people with lesser systems won't be disadvantaged as much as they could have been.

While some of the bleaker battlefields, especially in the evening, don't look great, on the whole the visuals offer a good level of detail considering the scope of the battles.

tested skills honed over the years in previous *TW* games, while also bringing in new tactical manoeuvres and ideas. For example, battle lines don't have to be as compact as they used to be in order to withstand a cavalry charge. Now they can be stretched over a vast area, maximising the number of guns that can be fired at once. Terrain is also more important than ever. Defending on a hill allows for troops in the second row to fire over the heads of those below. With ranged combat being so important, the extra reach they gain from being on a slope can be vital. While veterans will still feel right at home, they'll be learning new things as they progress.

Which brings us neatly onto the campaign map. As said earlier, it's a lot more substantial and epic in scope compared to all



WAR

"Gone are the boring auto resolved naval battles, replaced with seascapes and the splintering crashes of cannonballs"

REVIEWSEMPIRE: TOTAL WAR

previous *TW* games, both in terms of sheer size and the number of places to conquer/fight over.

While *Empire* never comes close to the almost mind-boggling size of the maps in Paradox's strategy games (such as *Hearts of Iron*), the majority of players will be perfectly happy with the map's scale. Realism mods will doubtless be unleashed on an unsuspecting public within a few months of this game's release, but we're happy with what CA have given us.

CORE CHANGES

The way the campaign works has also been tweaked since *Medieval II*. A lot of the buildings and construction projects that can be undertaken have moved from a region's major city to the outlying countryside, contained within the towns and settlements that pop up as an area's population grows. Investing in farms will lead to more villages growing into towns, which provides more chances to create specialist settlements by building schools, factories and so on.

Each town can only be driven in one particular direction, so if you build a school in one, you can't then build a factory as well. You can build better facilities as your technology improves, but to change a town's focus you have to destroy what's been built before.

What this also means is that the region's capital is no longer the sole focus of combat in a location. There are now lots of different places to besiege or occupy, including permanent forts (these don't disappear when emptied like those in *Medieval II*) and the towns and industries you construct.

Guerrilla warfare is also realistic now, with irregular forces capable of wrecking your carefully planned economic setup while you sit cowering in your heavily fortified capital. At some

point, you have to venture out and put a stop to these guerillas, or you'll face bankruptcy and the desertion of your own troops.

There's definitely more scope for tactical play on the campaign map. Occupying an enemy's best source of income can force him to abandon his defences and meet you, while ambushes are now much easier to achieve. Armies now have much larger zones of control, which can be activated when an enemy force unwittingly moves into it. These enlarged zones also affect what units can come to your aid as reinforcements in battle.

Because of the increased number of things on the campaign map for you to deal with, it can be a little bewildering when you first start a game. Playing as

someone like Russia, Britain or Spain is initially difficult to get to grips with properly, because their territories are much more numerous than the smaller factions. In fact, we recommend you start with one of the smaller ones, just until you get a handle on how the new campaign concepts work. It's fine once you get the hang of it, but the increased complexity is something that might be a hindrance to new players. What has helped a little, though, is the removal of

a number of irrelevant units from the map – like diplomats and merchants. (I've lost count of the amount of times I forgot a merchant or a diplomat existed, and left them standing in a foreign land ignored and unloved.)

As merchants and diplomats are absent, the economic and diplomatic interactions between nations take place through the menu system. These systems work more realistically this way and it also means you don't end



Trade me up, Scotty

How to make money and influence people



As well as the Americas, India and Europe, there are four trade zones: coastal areas that can be exploited for huge financial gain. Firstly, you'll need to build a trade fleet and then sail it all the way to (for example) the coast of Africa, where you can then attempt to dominate the trade lanes and build up a huge monopoly. Other nations will be trying to stop you, and you also need to watch out for the ever-present threat of pirates, so make sure you build enough combat ships to protect your interests.



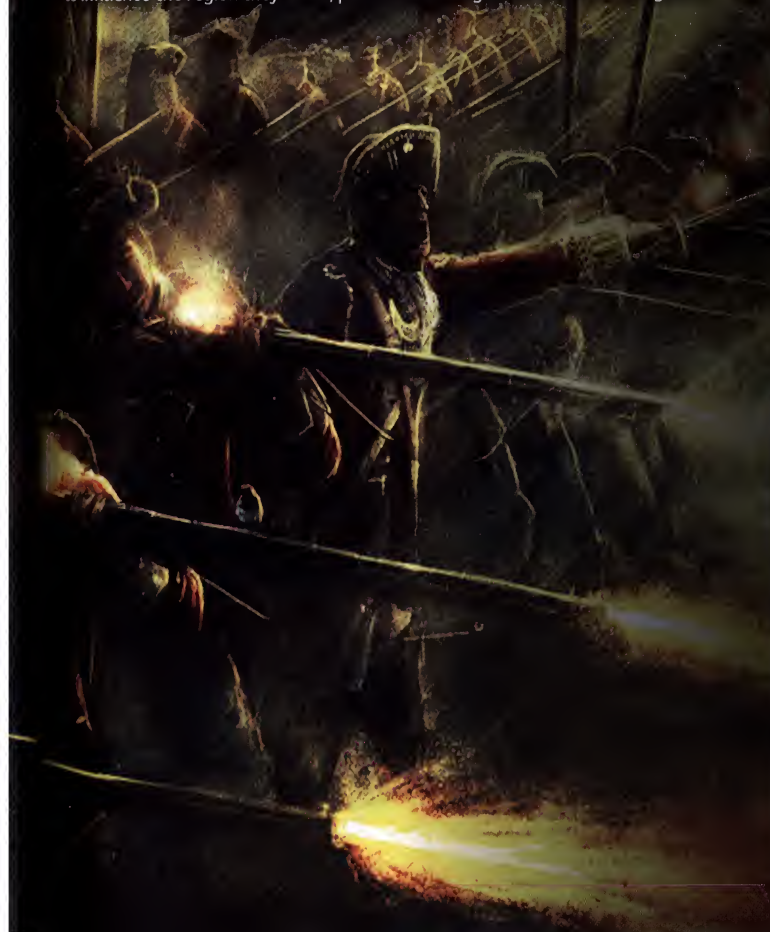
the assassin and spy characters have been melded to form the Rake (or Thuggee in India), a Dick Turpin-style highwayman character that can do everything the assassin and spy could in *Medieval II*.

There's also a new addition: the Gentleman. Think of him as a Great Leader from *Civilization IV*: a unit that can boost research or production depending on what type spawns in your empire. Britain starts off with Isaac Newton, for example, so sticking him in a school-oriented town will significantly boost your research capability.

You also no longer have to worry about recruiting all these characters from your cities, as they spawn depending on what buildings you've invested in. Build a lot of bawdyhouses and brothels and you will get more Rakes spawning, but construct schools and you'll get Gentlemen. This is a simple system, but it's one that requires you to think ahead about what you'll be wanting to do later on in the game –

up in the situation where you can't sue for peace because you don't have the resources to build a diplomat.

This doesn't mean there aren't any characters other than the armies, though. You'll still have religious zealots to influence the region they are in, plus



The science of things

Leading the world in research has distinct advantages

Total War games have never focused on research and science, instead having you construct big buildings that unlock the better units. *Empire* is different, using *Civilization*-style technology research. There are a number of tech trees and it's virtually, if not completely, impossible to max out all the trees in one game.

You can choose to concentrate on social research to improve the lot of the public, industrial and agricultural research

to help you to improve your infrastructure, or military and naval trees, that provide better weapons and materials for your forces. Make sure you pick the right things to specialise in, or you could find yourself incapable of taking on the big powers.

You can, though, trade your technology with others, although the AI (again like in *Civ*) won't necessarily be willing to help you out without a significant monetary reimbursement on your part.

finding you need better zealots when all you've been spending money on are brothels is a very expensive mistake.

But what of the issues that have plagued previous *TW* games for years then? By this we primarily mean "have you sorted out the diplomacy and the enemy AI, Creative Assembly?" Thankfully, they have (to an extent).

signed with anyone. Indeed, you need to consider who you do sign them with, because a bad decision will severely hamper your economic performance.

The issue of AI has been at the forefront of all criticism of the *TW* series since *Shogun*. Even *Medieval II*, as good as it was, was plagued by some hilariously inept computer opposition.

"Irregular forces are capable of wrecking your economic setup"

First of all, diplomacy has always been one of the weakest, most tacked on elements of the *TW* series. To many it seemed an afterthought that was irrelevant in the grand scheme of things. Alliances would be broken for no reason, and smaller nations would refuse peace offerings even if they had virtually no troops or land left, and so on. CA have dealt with this by massively increasing the number of nations you can interact with and, although they haven't increased the number of actual diplomatic options very much, they've made them a little bit more realistic.

There's also the ability to trade tech research (see 'The science of things') like in *Civilization* and trade agreements are now limited, meaning they can't just be

In that game it wasn't unusual to see the AI's general thunder across the battle straight into your wall of pikes or spears, leaving his entire army miles behind. There were other, less obvious problems too – it was too easy to flank the computer's armies and they'd often just stand there and have more than half their men eliminated by arrows. Siege battles were incredibly difficult to lose, once you realised that just positioning your men in deep lines along one city street would make you practically invulnerable. The AI could, of course, have just gone a different way and caught you in the flank, but it rarely did that, preferring to just send wave after wave crashing into your impregnable defences.



Naval battles are great, but do take some getting used to.

"Novices will enjoy the ability to blow stuff up, while those looking for a deeper experience will find their demands met"

Truly epic.

Some units still rely on melee attacks.

Some cannons can be moved around the battlefield.

From here to just over there

Where we've come from and where we're going



SHOGUN

Shogun is where the *Total War* franchise started out. This RTS about warfare in feudal Japan was a hit both with critics and RTS fans, despite its flaws.



MEDIEVAL

Medieval was *Total War's* first step into the mainstream. By using a more recognisable and accessible period it attracted more interest amongst gamers.



ROME

Rome: Total War went further still and is considered by many to be the pinnacle of the series. It also had Head Hurlers, which are yet to be beaten.



MEDIEVAL II

Medieval II: Total War disappointed some, but most loved the more epic feel of the battles and the fact you could push big crucifixes about.



EMPIRE

Empire is the definitive *Total War* game, without question. Deep yet accessible, gorgeous yet not intensive, it'll take some beating - even by CA's next RTS title.

Those days are behind us now, thankfully. Although *TW's* AI will never be perfect and there will always be moments where it makes goofy decisions, CA have significantly advanced the tactical capabilities of computer armies. For example, in one battle I was fighting in the Road to Independence mini-campaign, the French hid a group of Native American musketeers to the side of the battlefield, popping up once I'd engaged their main line and shooting my men in the back.

I still won the battle, but the fact that I now consider potential places I can be ambushed from is excellent. These improvements will never beat the tactical struggle between two human players, but the quality of the AI is certainly at its highest level since the series began. Siege battles are better

now too, with buildings that can be fortified and a focus on open spaces, rather than tightly packed streets and tedious hand-to-hand brawls.

The core concepts of the game are all present and correct, and better than ever before, which is all that really matters when it comes down to it. But *Total War* has always been about more than its main elements, it's also the little extra touches that make it special; that make it feel like you're discovering new things each time you play.

SMALL DETAILS

Empire has so many of these touches that it's impossible to mention them all here. In fact, I doubt I've discovered the majority of them. As you go through the game, buying new units and gaining new technology, you'll see your options

in battles and on the campaign map increase. For example, put a lot of effort into ordnance research and you'll discover new types of cannon shot to use, which could make a big difference to the outcome of a battle. Send a Rake out to do some devious deeds in enemy lands and you'll notice he can challenge high-ranking enemy officials to personal duels, giving you the chance to eliminate a rival's best general without the risk of secret assassination and a potential hit to your reputation, plus the chance of sparking an all-out war.

Back to the battlefield and you'll find you can build fortifications around your cannons, place huge wooden spikes in the ground in front of some of your riflemen and form a diamond formation with your cavalry, enabling quicker and more efficient turning while moving

at speed. There's just so many little abilities and things to do, I could easily go on for ages detailing each one.

Empire: Total War is a triumph for Creative Assembly, successfully moving the series into a new sphere of history that some thought they might struggle with. Not only have they prevailed, they've gone beyond what some thought they'd be able to. Hugely epic in



Firing arcs indicate a unit's range.

"Last one in is a rotten egg!"



Damaging sails reduces manoeuvrability.

Pirates will try to raid the trade lanes, so make sure you protect your merchant ships.



scope in both the battles and the campaign map, there's simply nothing else out there, barring other *Total War* games, that can come close to matching *Empire*. This game is an exercise in how to bring strategy gaming to a general audience, without compromising a series that doesn't cater too much to either the casual or hardcore players.

Empire is accessible and deep, fun and serious, all at the same time. Strategy novices will enjoy the ability to blow stuff up with cannons and charge about with their cavalry, while those looking for a deeper experience will find that their demands have more than been met by Creative Assembly. All that remains is for the planned multiplayer campaign to meet the lofty expectations of players and you'll have the perfect strategy package. **PC**



Diplomacy has improved since *Medieval 2*.

PCZONE

Graphics: Gorgeous yet functional
Sound: Epic as the battles
Multiplayer: Yes, through Steam

- ✓ Very deep, yet accessible
- ✓ Definite improvements
- ✓ Better campaign map
- ✓ Much improved AI
- ✓ Naval battles a triumph
- ✗ Can be a little confusing

94

Outstanding

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BURNOUT PARADISE: THE ULTIMATE BOX

Making childish "brum-brum", "skreee" and "krassh!" noises, *Steve Hogarty* takes on a console favourite

DEVELOPER Criterion
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE criteriongames.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99



AT A GLANCE...

One big city, plus suburbs, plus rurbs, plus cars, plus you. Crash, smash and race your way to victory in this open-world, go-anywhere racer.

Minimum system requirements:
2.8GHz Pentium 4, 1GB RAM, and a Geforce 6600 or ATI Radeon X1300 graphics card or better.

HOW IT STACKS

BURNOUT PARADISE: THE ULTIMATE BOX **89%**

NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED **88%**

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED **80%**

WHEN *BURNOUT PARADISE* was first announced for the PC, it was easy to get carried away in the swell of excitement and aplomb. Criterion pelted us with movie after video after film after screenshot, all at maddeningly high resolutions so they could be stretched across five monitors stacked atop one another. They smugly crossed their arms like a victorious M. Bison, as the PC version of the massively popular console racer tore along at 60 frames per second. On a laptop. There was, in effect, some fanfare about the release of *Burnout Paradise* on PC. And it was entirely warranted.

We rarely see a developer this excited about a port to PC, and putting genuine thought into how things should work on release. Criterion's got a lot right – the full-featured trial version for example, which allows people (like you) to play the game before shelling out for it. They got a bit wrong too. The interface and menus are still clunky and weird, and even though 360 pads are fully supported it

feels bizarre having to use F1 and F2 flip between pages of menu options. There's also some awful, awful registration malarky going on here too. Not only do you have to submit your details to EA before playing online, but you'll be hammering your keys in confusion at the interface they give you to do it.

ON A MISSION...

The registration is where the clunkiness of *Burnout Paradise* ends. Once you're in the titular Paradise City, you're fully part of this huge, sprawling, open-world racer Criterion have created. You begin with no more than a handful of cars (and some bikes from the free add-on packaged with the game), and a low-grade learner's license. Events are placed at every junction in the city – if you spot some traffic lights, there's something for

you to do there. *Paradise* features no goal either, other than to work your way through the license ranks so you can earn more cars.

From the outset, you're free to roam the city and discover the myriad of collectables and smashables crammed into every ounce of available space. Even billboards can be driven through, as long as you can figure out how to reach them. The first shortcut-signposting flashing yellow barrier you plough through cheekily announces that you've discovered one of 400 of the things. The in-game radio personality DJ Atomika will hint at secret jumps and events in the city. You can even, at any time, parallel park with a handbrake turn and receive a percentage grade for doing so. Even driving down a street will compare your score against other players who've driven



Montgomery represents that rarest of things – a British car manufacturer.

"This game is an arcade racer, and as such the cars and bikes you're driving and riding go really, really fast"



down that street, and tell you if you're the fastest. You really can't avoid achieving things in *Paradise*.

There are five kinds of events: Road Rage, which spawns several opponents and tasks you with ramming them off the road or into other vehicles; Marked Man, in which you must reach a point on the map without being taken out by several tenacious, and rather menacing, black AI cars; Stunt Run, in which you

must jump off ramps, spin, drift, head into oncoming traffic and barrel roll your car to earn points; Burning Route, which is a car-specific time trial between two points; and the simply titled Race, which is a race from whatever junction the event starts at, to one of eight final locations in the city.

These Races aren't as simple as you might think, with Paradise City remaining open throughout the events.

No route is flagged up, and while flashing street signs at the top of the screen suggest which turns to take, nothing prevents you finding your own way through the city and potentially discovering shortcuts along the way.

The city is littered with detail – hidden ramps, multi-storey car parks, and further outside the city, back roads and dirt trails – it makes exploration worthwhile as you uncover the shortest paths through familiar territory.

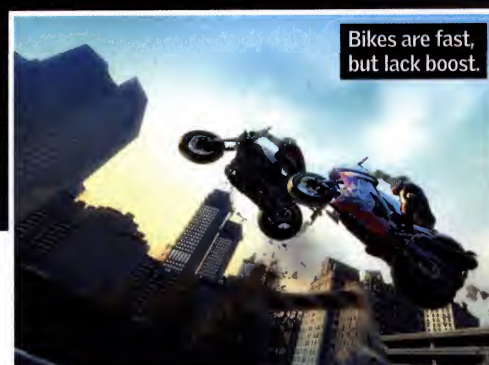
FEEL THE NEED

AI cars take varying routes too, and as you're all converging on the same finish line it often makes for some exciting last-minute encounters, with eight cars piling into the same street at high speed.

Speed is something *Paradise* does beautifully. At its core, this game is an arcade racer, and as such the cars and bikes you're driving and riding go really, really fast. The game delivers an incredible sense of speed too, and it's

here that the smooth, locked frame rate sees a pay off. Criterion have always insisted on this 60fps standard for their games on console, and it's obvious why – at the speeds you're racing the game becomes as much about your reaction times as your cornering prowess. Driving into oncoming traffic and drifting increases your boost bar (which, it shouldn't need explaining, gives you more oomph), and you'll spend a lot of your time with your eyes trained on pairs of rapidly approaching headlights, or scanning for traffic lights in preparation for a junction.

When you muck it up, you muck it up spectacularly. Shunts and scrapes are fine, but collide with a vehicle at speed or plough headfirst into a wall and the camera flips to a cinematic perspective and time slows to a crawl.



Bikes are fast, but lack boost.





Showtime is a bizarre addition to the game.

Showboating

Showtime mode is *Paradise's* answer to Crash Junctions

Old *Burnout* featured Crash Junctions, carefully constructed stretches of road where, if you timed it just right, you could rack up millions of points by smashing into some buses and causing a pile-up. Showtime can be activated anywhere in Paradise City, and is a sort of lumbering, car destroying minigame. Points are awarded for hitting cars, combos can be scored, and you can make your car jump about the place as if controlled by a sky-bound puppeteer. It's weird. And we're fairly certain we don't like it.



I can't count the number of times I've had to write "time slows to a crawl" in this magazine, because the world and his wife have an unshakeable stiffy for time manipulation – but *Paradise's* slow-motion crashes could be considered art. They're beautifully rendered; metal crumples gently as cracks race across windcreens. Bonnets fold up, doors are shorn from their hinges, and the car frame twists and distorts. The sound is horrifying – a bassy rumble accompanied by a metallic screech and the tinkling of shattered glass.

Every event indulges in this crash porn – every opponent you force into a wall gets their own slow-motion death

parade – but the Road Rage event in particular glorifies vehicular violence. T-bone takedowns, car takedowns, bus takedowns, vertical takedowns (when you land on top of an opponent), your actions are monitored and specifically celebrated at every turn.

YOU WILL COMPETE

Reams of statistics record all of your doings, and in-game achievements reward particularly amazing things you've accomplished (two barrel rolls in a single jump, for example).

Four hours in however, and you'll start to feel the crash fatigue. The scenes, while eminently pretty, are unskippable, becoming a patience-testing penalty for



Burnout Paradise lets you play on two wheels, not just four.





Weapons can be upgraded with silencers and the like.

9-60
Tommy Gun (lvl. 1)

"Hello? Yes, We just bitch-slapped your son. You wanna come pick him up?"

THE GODFATHER II

Steve Hogarty refuses every offer ever made to him, just to prove a point

DEVELOPER EA Redwood Shores
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE ea.com/godfather2
ETA 10 April
PRICE £29.99

AT A GLANCE...

Just like the movie, *Godfather II* improves on the original. But under the innovative mob management and family tree fiddling is shoddiness.

Minimum system requirements:
2.8GHz Pentium, 1GB RAM (2GB Vista) and a 256MB video card with Shader Model 3 support.

HOW IT STACKS

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV 91%

THE GODFATHER II 61%

THE GODFATHER 57%

I F I CAN reach and intimidate the owner of La Maison Rouge, New York's swankiest titty bar, then I'll be running the city's prostitution ring. With that comes "perks", if you know what I'm sayin'? That's right! It unlocks the brass knuckles. So I ordered my demolitions expert to blow open the back entrance to the brothel, frantically whistling at him and my henchman to draw them away from the bomb, around which they were scurrying fervently.

Once we made it inside, the terrified girls began pawing at the wallpaper, trapped in an absurd, looping animation. Guards poured out of doorways, standing next to my soldiers before realising what was happening. My shotgun had stopped making noises by this point, and so each blast appeared to be an elaborate, bloodless miming routine.

Once I'd reached Lady Vaughn, the proprietor of the filthy business, I began to put the pressure on. Grabbing Vaughn

by the shoulders, the game helpfully announced I'd found the woman's weakness: punches. Aha! She soon folded under my punching might, and La Maison Rouge fell under the protection of the Steve Family. Later on the game would spawn my car on top of me.

JUST CRIMINAL

That's *The Godfather II* summed up in a single mission. A poor man's GTA with some clever ideas laid on top. This is a highly ambitious sequel, and the features EA have introduced are intriguing, and absolutely engaging when they work as intended. You're the Don of your own family, starting out with some low-level muscle you hire based on their skill set – demolition, arson, safecracking, or kicking people in the face. These men can be upgraded with cash to increase their health, their specialities, or perhaps shortening the time they spend in prison. They can also be promoted through the

family, from soldier to Capo, to your most trusted advisor – your Consigliere.

Locations in the game's three cities can be owned. Bars and restaurants operate as fronts, bringing in money, while brothels and other key locations operate as part of a larger crime ring – own the whole set and you reap rewards, such as body armour, armoured cars, and the brass knuckles I mentioned. Opposing families will post guards at



You can make cakes shaped like baseball bats, and feed them to your friends.

Executive decision

You don't look like any kind of Don I've ever seen...

While the game follows the plot of the movie to a certain degree – familiar characters and events from *The Godfather: Part II* will appear – you don't play any of the major characters. Instead you play the part of Dominic, who's more 'made-up man' than 'made man'.

You can customise your character's appearance in a variety of different ways:

hairstyle, jaw line, skin colour, and they'll trot about during the cutscenes like some kind of wacky clown child.

Remaining true to the movie though, is the violent and ruthless executions. Our favourite is, naturally, the Tommy Gun in the mouth, though the baseball bat (also in the mouth) is a fun way to off someone too.

Hair
Head
Facial Detail
Eyes
Nose
Mouth
Body

Customize the look of your character or press Tab to Exit and accept current character.

"The Godfather II is an improvement over its predecessor, though that's hardly a gratuitous compliment"

these places in order to hold on to them; similarly, you'll hire guards to defend your property once you've taken over. Taking over is a matter of getting through whatever defences exist, and smacking the owner until they agree that they need protection.

The game's strategic options are unexpectedly complex, you can even send your made men – trusted Family members – off to capture territories without you, and to defend them if your guards are losing the fight. You're always warned when an attack is taking place, as well as how many enemies and guards are at that location. Your rival family's made men can be murdered, but only in a specific manner – anything else and they'll merely be hospitalised.

To find out how they should be killed, you've got to do favours for randoms in the street who'll then hand over the relevant information. Why wandering pedestrians hold this intelligence, and why you can't beat them into submission like everybody else remains a mystery. Killing rivals' made men is optional, though it'll make the eradication of a family considerably easier.

MAMMA MIA!

Sadly, the management aspect of *Godfather II* is completely undermined the rest of the game. The driving is shoddy, as cars feel weightless and handle like shopping trolleys; shootouts are fidgety and awkward; the AI embarrasses itself at every turn by

ignoring enemies and running in circles; visually the world is bereft of detail and utterly lifeless; and the cities are tiny when compared to the genre incumbent *Grand Theft Auto IV*. The underlying game here is, without a doubt, poor.

Redwood's ambition should be celebrated though, and you'll find yourself just about able to persevere with the wanky car handling. There's a great feeling of progression to be had in gradually tightening your grip on a city, and the payoff once you're in total control is satisfyingly explosive.

The Godfather II is an improvement over its predecessor, though that's hardly a gratuitous compliment. How about this – *The Godfather II* is surprisingly not as plain as you might have thought it would be, all things considered. Especially when you make, as I've done here, a really stupid looking character so that every cutscene becomes ridiculously comical. **PCZ**

"So we're agreed, my bowl cut looks amazing."

Hit the spacebar to activate a drive-by at any time.

PCZONE

Graphics Shiny, but ugly
Sound Some licensed music
Multiplayer Up to 16 players

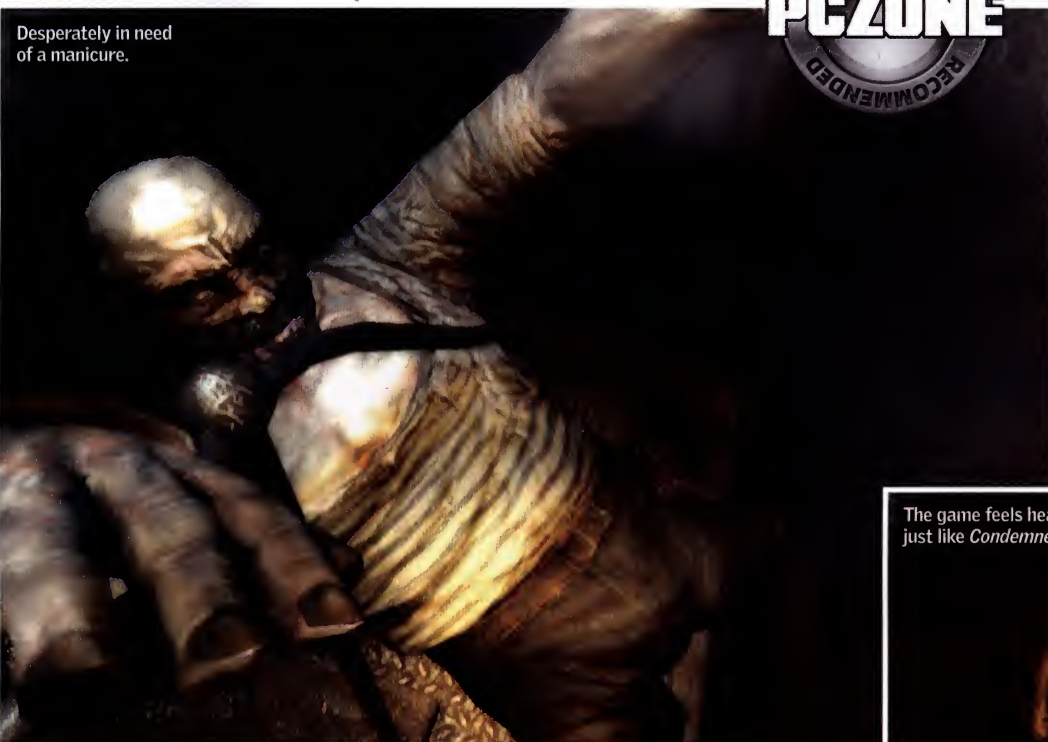
- ✓ Strategic Family management is great
- ✓ Dominating cities is satisfying
- ✗ Dogshit driving
- ✗ Dogshit shooting
- ✗ Buggy on release

61

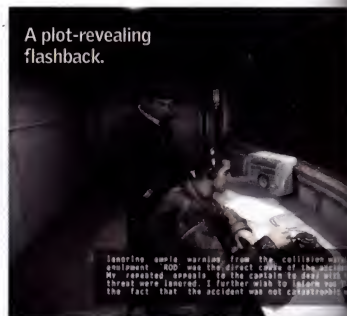
Badly made man



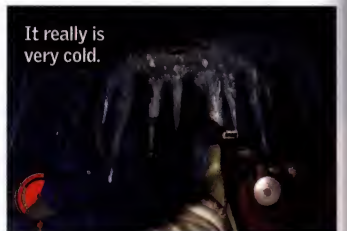
Desperately in need of a manicure.



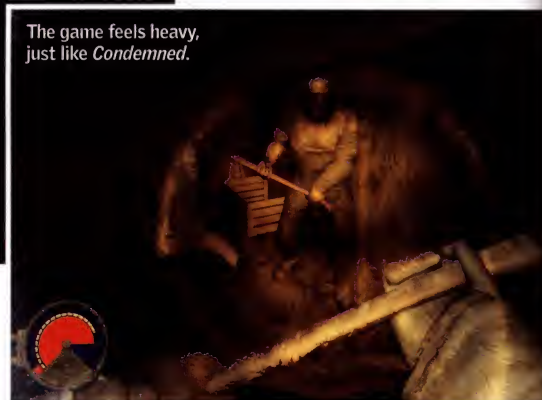
A plot-revealing flashback.



It really is very cold.



The game feels heavy, just like *Condemned*.



CRYOSTASIS: SLEEP OF REASON

David Brown is frozen in a block of ice somewhere in Siberia

DEVELOPER Action Forms
PUBLISHER 1C Company
WEBSITE cryostasis-game.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99

AT A GLANCE...

Condemned meets *BioShock* in the icy wastes of the Soviet Arctic Circle, with a smattering of psychic powers.

Minimum system requirements:
AMD 3000+ or Intel equivalent, 1GB RAM (2GB *Vista*), Radeon 9800 Pro or NVIDIA 6800GT or higher.

HOW IT STACKS

BIOSHOCK 96%

CONDEMNED 85%

CRYOSTASIS 80%

IS IT FAIR to call *Cryostasis* the Russian *BioShock*, as everyone seems to be doing? Yes and no. Yes, in that it's set in a claustrophobic world, full of misshapen horrors. No, because it feels a lot more like a regular FPS than Irrational's title. A fairer comparison would be calling it the Russian *Condemned*, as the combat and movement definitely feels like Monolith's beat-a-tramp-up.

The game is set upon the broken hulk of a Soviet atomic icebreaker, marooned in the Arctic Circle for years and with no known explanation as to why it ran aground or what happened to the crew. The plot is revealed both through the use of a pseudo-old wives' tale, recounted by collecting story cards at various intervals, and flashbacks of events leading up to the disaster.

You also have the ability to enter the minds of various corpses you encounter on the ship, and travel back in time to correct the mistakes that led to their death. For example, you find a man imprisoned in a block of ice. Entering his

mind, you discover he had failed to open a valve to release the trapped water that was threatening to engulf his section. By fixing his error, you save his life and his corpse vanishes.

Sometimes these interventions are necessary to progress – by completing one of them, a ladder drops, allowing you to proceed when returning to the future.

CHILLY WILLIES

As *BioShock* had its water, *Cryostasis* has its ice. This is primarily where the comparisons come from. The cold plays a crucial role in the game as you don't have a health bar, you have a body heat gauge. Enemies drain your body heat, and if it falls too low, you die. To survive, you need to find heat sources to warm yourself up or switch on long-silent mechanisms which heat the rooms and cause a really swanky ice-melting effect. Watching walls melt really does not get tiresome.

Cryostasis is a solid game. If you liked *Condemned*, you'll certainly like this. It's paced slowly, has genuinely unnerving

moments and deserves more attention than it'll get because of its low profile. It also has the best snow storms ever seen in a game. Recommended for FPS horror fans, although the environments are by definition a tad repetitive. **W**

PCZONE

Graphics Repetitive, but detailed
Sound Excellent
Multiplayer Nope

- ✓ Unique setting
- ✓ Chilling atmosphere
- ✓ Just like *Condemned*
- ✗ Locations can be repetitive
- ✗ Not for action junkies

80

Chillingly good



An homage to Discworld?



Defend your base with walls.



This snow seems out of place.

BATTLEFORGE

David Brown has moulded himself into a hardened clicking warrior

DEVELOPER Phenomic
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE battleforge.com
ETA 27 March
PRICE £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

Trading card game-meets-generic fantasy RTS, with a micro-transaction business model for buying the cards.

Minimum system requirements:
2GHz Pentium 4 or equivalent, 512MB RAM, and a 128MB graphics card.
Internet connection required.

HOW IT STACKS

WARCRAFT III: THE FROZEN THRONE 86%
MAGIC: THE GATHERING - BATTLEFIELDS 63%
BATTLEFORGE 60%

WHILE THIS TITLE has an unusual concept – mixing a trading card game with an RTS – it has the potential for hugely varied strategic play, Phenomic have delivered a bit of a let down.

When *BattleForge* begins, you're dropped into a training ground – the Forge – where you learn about the interface and your cards (deployable units). Testing units' abilities involves putting them on the screen and watching their health bars go down. Once you're ready to play you pick a deck of 20 cards, which define what you can use in battle.

Phenomic have tried to vary your choices with four types of cards with different foci (eg Fire is offensive, Frost defensive); the option to set up multiple decks; and making rare cards available in booster packs. As you only get 64 cards to start with buying new ones is essential if you want an adaptable, or even decent, library to make decks from.



More units = hectic battles.

An eight-card booster pack costs 250 *BattleForge* points (about £2.20 in real money) and contains five standard, two uncommon and one rare card. As there are 200 cards to collect, it'll be a while before you get the lot, as you'll end up with piles of crap, duplicated, and crap duplicated cards. The good news is the game comes with 3,000 points – enough for 12 boosters – and you can sell and buy cards at in-game Auction houses or swap them with other players.

CARD COUNTING

BattleForge's battles lack any base building, instead forcing you to fight for power nodes and monuments. The nodes allow you to deploy units quicker, while monuments let you build higher quality units – the more monuments you get, the better the units. This means that PvP battles start with a rush to secure the first monument, as whoever gets there first wins the game – usually within five minutes of starting.

The PvE storyline is fantasy twaddle, but it does offer co-operative play, which is a pleasant experience. As you advance, maps increase in size until they reach a player limit of 12. These wars can get a bit manic, as you might imagine.

Despite there being a single-player storyline, don't think this game can be

played offline. All your cards are stored on a remote server, so no internet connection means no decks and no game.

BattleForge runs smoothly and is pretty enough, with a wide selection of large units to choose from. However, battles see you going up against the same units – the ones players have identified as being the best. So the only real variety *BattleForge* provides is on paper. This is sad, because Phenomic have put lots of effort into packing content into this game. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Colourful
Sound What you'd expect, functional
Multiplayer PvE good, PvP over in seconds

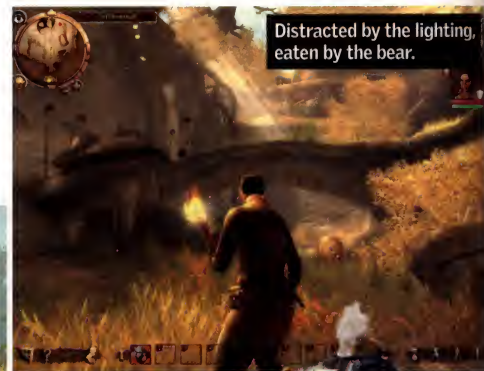
- ✓ Lots of cards/units
- ✓ Co-op PvE is good
- ✗ PvP is too frantic

60
Uniquely generic



Wanfrid Toberen

1. I am Wanfrid Toberen and I am traveling to Ferdok. I overheard your conversation with the guard by chance.
2. My name is Wanfrid Toberen. I need two attestations who are willing to testify to my good character... Do you have any idea who could help me?
3. Can I ask you one more question, Salina?
4. Nothing. Excuse me, I have to leave now.



DRAKENSANG: THE DARK EYE

Nick Brakespear sings a song of sixpence, and rolls a d12

DEVELOPER Radon Labs
PUBLISHER dtp entertainment
WEBSITE drakensang.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

A traditional pen-and-paper RPG wrapped in modern visuals. Solid, but very clichéd.

Minimum system requirements:
2.6GHz Intel Core 2 Duo E8200, 2GB RAM (3GB Vista), NVIDIA GeForce 8800 GT or better graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

THE WITCHER 88%

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2 86%

DRAKENSANG 60%

FANS OF OLD-FASHIONED stat-heavy high-fantasy RPGs might enjoy this. Because that's what *The Dark Eye* is, thinly veiled behind a graphics engine that makes everything look as if you've just emerged from heavily chlorinated water.

If you enjoyed the quirkiness of having your actions thwarted repeatedly by arbitrary dice rolls then prepare to fog up with tears of nostalgia. Also true to the older traditions of the RPG, *The Dark Eye* is free of most modern trends of tactical third-person combat, so killing things simply involves clicking them.

Unfortunately, any similarity to the likes of *Baldur's Gate* is limited to quirky gameplay mechanics and not to the quality of the writing or game design. While there's a great selection of classes on offer, the option to customise stats utilises a bewildering splurge of numbers and buttons that even veteran pencil-and-paper RPGers will find obtuse.

The game's setting is akin to the bastard love-child of Tolkien and Kevin Sorbo, filled as it is with your usual mix

of dwarf, elf and dragon, but with the addition of Hercules-look-a-like pirates and buxom Amazonians. Even your first potential party member appears to have an arse on her chest. While this game will draw fans from its pen-and-paper source material, to those unfamiliar with the German RPG scene there may be much to raise an eyebrow of disapproval at.

Aesthetically, the game shows a lot of polish. The ambient soundscapes are rich, the music is well-crafted, and the graphics are smooth and vibrant. The design of the world in general is impressive, with even minor characters given surprisingly detailed attire.



Enemies and their dungeons don't reek too much of a copy-and-paste job either.

All in all *The Dark Age* is a solid game, but one that suffers somewhat from stilted gameplay and a clichéd plot. **PCZ**



PCZONE

Graphics Smooth and vibrant
Sound Rich ambience, passable voice-overs
Multiplayer Zero

- ✓ Heaving bosoms
- ✓ Gleaming swords
- ✓ Sounds good
- ✗ Dice rolling
- ✗ Uninspiring setting
- ✗ Slightly obtuse UI

60
For the fans only



CEVILLE

David Brown gets pointing and clicking

DEVELOPER Realmforge
PUBLISHER Kalypso
WEBSITE ceville-game.com
cornecrovision
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

A FRENCH ADVENTURE that's aiming at the comedy end of the market. Things don't bode well, do they? *Ceville* isn't as annoying as you might imagine, but this isn't a game for those with an ounce of cynicism in their bodies, despite that the main character should appeal to bitter types that like to complain. That's me down to a T, but sadly *Ceville* didn't strike a right chord. Essentially, it tries too hard to be funny.

The game is all about an evil tyrant (the titular Ceville) who's deposed by a group of bumbling rebels, comedy turncoat guards, his treacherous former disciple, Basilus, and a vain paladin named Ambrosius. Languishing in jail, the deposed monarch plots revenge on those who have wronged him and, with the help of an innocent young girl, he puts his plan into action. As you can see in the screenshots,

the game is hugely influenced by *Monkey Island*. The colours, the characters, the environments, everything oozes *Monkey*.

MANY HOMAGES

The references don't stop there. Just in the first hour or so of play, I spotted gaming nods to *Day of the Tentacle*, *Legend of Kyrandia* (*Ceville* reminds me very much of the evil Malcolm), and there's even a scene where Horny from *Dungeon Keeper* and LeChuck from *Monkey Island* make cameos. There's also a nod to *Life of Brian* in the form of a prisoner hanging from a cell wall, Sergio Leone westerns (jangly music and extreme close-ups on eyes during stand-offs), and *Lord of the Rings* (the title of the game's first chapter). I won't keep on about this, but for the observant, there's a huge amount to spot if you look carefully enough. Oh, when Ceville says "Alice was chained here," is it reaching to see a reference to the seminal '90s grunge band? Perhaps.

Aside from those gaming and cultural nods, this is your standard adventure game.

The puzzles are decent enough, though can be a little fiddly about the way you do them, such as knowing what to do but having to do it in a convoluted manner. The voices are hit and miss, especially the main character. Sometimes he works, sometimes he grates, and there doesn't seem to be much middle ground.

Ceville is a pleasant enough game that doesn't demand to be played (and, let's be honest, is too expensive), but adventure fanatics should get enough joy out of it to warrant a purchase. **PC7**

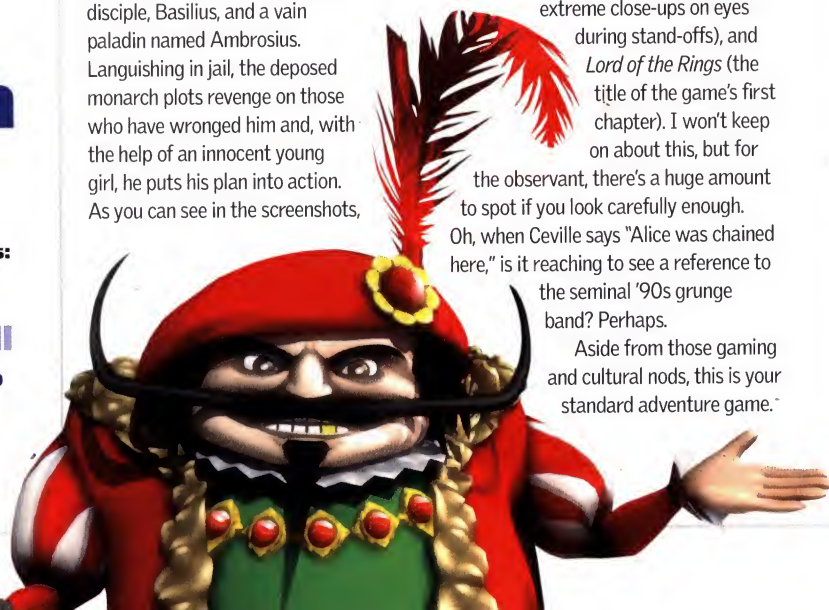
AT A GLANCE...

French developer takes a crack at creating the next *Monkey Island*, sprinkling a liberal dose of comedy references in along the way.

Minimum system requirements:
1.7GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and a 256MB graphics card

HOW IT STACKS

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND **82%**
JACK KEANE **73%**
CEVILLE **65%**



PCZONE

Graphics Pleasant
Sound Hit-and-miss voices
Multiplayer Not in this genre

- ✓ Lots of references
- ✓ Decent puzzles
- ✓ Evil main character
- ✗ Overly referential
- ✗ Forced humour

65

Cruella Ceville



STEEL FURY – KHARKOV 1942

Rumble boom squeak rumble crunch

DEVELOPER Discus Games & Graviteam
PUBLISHER Lighthouse Interactive
WEBSITE steelfury.info
ETA: Out now
PRICE £29.99

Minimum system requirements:
3GHz Pentium 4, 512MB RAM (1GB Vista),
and a GeForce 6600 or better.



TANKS ARE TRICKY buggers at the best of times, big lumbering brutes that they are, but if their rumbling and whining gives you shivers of joy then perhaps this game will do the same for you. It'll also help if you're a fan of games like *IL2 Sturmovik* and *Operation Flashpoint*, given that this is a simulation of almost equal complexity. You command tanks and infantry, you drive tanks, you serve as gunner, but never at the same time. And those hatches? You'll have to open and close them manually, you lazy git.

True to both genre and subject, the game might seem a little impenetrable to begin with. Combat feedback isn't always clear, the game's campaigns are drenched in real history, and beyond the pleasing clunks and groans of your steel-clad monster, there is little that immediately rewards. As with other

such games however, persevere and you may find satisfaction as your tank rolls over a hill and into a large battle.

Black smoke lingers over beleaguered towns, the air is filled with the sound of thundering cannons, and scenery will collapse before you. The graphical quality ranges from impressive to somewhat coarse, with a great deal of detail given to tanks, but somewhat less given to infantry and scenery.

The mission editor breathes longevity into it, but the three types of tank available may be a limiting factor, and it certainly seems a shame that it couldn't have been developed as a broader military simulation, as the gameplay mechanics and attention to detail are relatively solid.

A game for enthusiasts and simulation masochists.

Nick Brakespear



PCZONE
68
Solid like my armour



CODENAME: PANZERS – COLD WAR

When two tribes go to war. Again

DEVELOPER Stormregion
PUBLISHER Atari
WEBSITE codenamepanzerscoldwar.com
ETA: Out now
PRICE £29.99

Minimum system requirements:
Intel Core 2 Duo 1.8GHz, 1GB RAM (2GB
for Vista), ATI Radeon X800 or NVIDIA
GeForce 6800 or faster.



PART OF THE recent trend in graphically-fancy real-time strategy games set in the mid 20th century, *Cold War* sees you in command during the political tension that followed WWII. With NATO and the Soviet Union coming to blows, the stage is set for infantry, tanks and helicopters to go rampaging across Europe.

Free from base-building, your only concern is the acquisition of the game's primary resource, Prestige. This is a by-product of victories large and small. Units can be upgraded, infantry may lob grenades or conjure forth tents and watchtowers, and much of the tactical micro-management we have come to expect is present.

Unfortunately, and despite the Cold War of the title, subtlety and tactics aren't much of an issue here. Equip an

APC with a repair kit, and it will repair anything within the repair radius. Couple this with a few tanks, and you have a regenerating bulldozer of doom. The emphasis is very much on armour, with infantry becoming a bit of a nuisance, exposed as it is without any clear implementation of cover besides the obligatory hide-in-building command.

The visuals are pleasing, with diffuse flashes of lightning glowing amid rain and smoke, fire looking suitably fluid and buildings collapsing in gratuitous clouds of dust. Sound, too, is well done, with gunfire becoming a muted popping as you move away from the action.

All the polish in the world could not mask the nagging feeling of tactical emptiness though, and with *Company of Heroes* now cheap, it's hard to give *Cold War* a strong recommendation.

Nick Brakespear



PCZONE
59
A bit chilly



Behold, my aqueduct!

GRAND AGES: ROME

What have the Romans ever done for us?

DEVELOPER Haemimont Games
PUBLISHER Kalypso Media
WEBSITE grandages.com/eu
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

Minimum system requirements:
2GHz Pentium 4, 1GB RAM, and a
GeForce 6600 or better graphics card.



Europe ain't as
big as it looks.

THE ROMANS ARE a rich source of gaming jollity, what with all their politics and warfare, big cities and preoccupation with violent entertainment. So it's a bit of a shame then, that all the games we get based on this part of history tend to be vast swathes of RTS and city-building games and little else. And so in that context I present *Grand Ages: Rome*.

Tasked with conquering a campaign map of Europe, *GA: Rome* has you building up your city, recruiting an army, squabbling with rival families and subjugate a few barbarians along the way to imperial glory.

Gameplay and controls are simple enough, with a neat right-click build menu that never feels too fiddly. Meanwhile, the camera allows you a lot of freedom, though does feel a little unwieldy and has a tendency to zoom out to a god's eye view at the slightest twitch of the mouse's scroll button.

Warfare is kept rather simple. Capturing things generally involves being near them unopposed, and forming armies consists of having the required resources and hitting the button. The combat itself leaves you somewhat uninvolved too, with soldiers clashing and resolving fights with little direction from you.

The cities themselves, while not as large other city sims', look the part and the sheen of the graphics engine is pleasing. Although bizarrely for a game about Rome, there's no road building. This dampens enthusiasm for city planning, but it also means you can't draw genitalia on the landscape.

To say that the game is shallow would be harsh, but it certainly doesn't plumb the potential depths of the period, and while it has multiplayer I can't see it having much longevity. You can call yourself Biggus Dickus though.

Nick Brakespear



Someone's pissed
off the gods.

PCZONE
68
Dullus Romanus



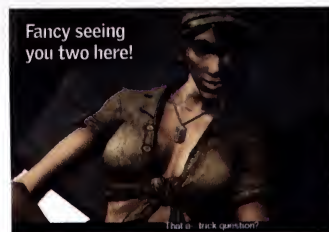
Slaughter Vietnamese
soldiers without guilt.

SHELLSHOCK 2: BLOOD TRAILS

Gouge my eyes out with some spoons

DEVELOPER Rebellion
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE rebellion.co.uk
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99

Minimum system requirements:
3GHz Pentium 4, 1GB RAM (2GB *Vista*),
and a 256MB graphics card (Pixel
Shader 3.0 required).



Fancy seeing
you two here!

IF YOU WANT something to put on the box, Mr Marketing Man, try this: "This is so bad, it is like beating old ladies to death with hammers." Sorry, I'm angry at having played *Shellshock 2: Blood Trails*. And, you know what's worse? I thought that it might be good. I even volunteered to play it, so I suppose I've got nobody to blame but myself.

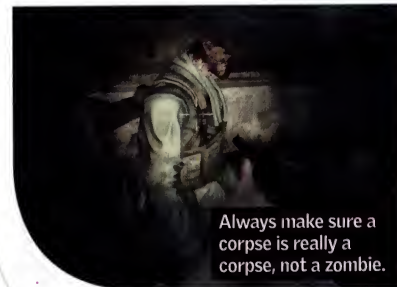
In this game you play a guy hanging around in Vietnam who's informed that his brother, along with many other people, has been mysteriously mutated into some kind of mindless killing machine. Basically, they're zombies. You even have to kill them with a shot to the head. Well, you can shoot them in the body as well, it just takes longer.

When playing *Blood Trails*, you'd be forgiven for thinking you're playing *Soldier of Fortune II*. The graphics are

what might politely be described as archaic. In fact, the whole game smacks of amateurism and sloppy design – guns' iron sights are huge, making it very difficult to see what you're doing. Mind you, the weapons aren't much more accurate when you use them. Sound effects are a bit naff, explosions are underwhelming, and the story – probably the best bit about the game – isn't presented in an engaging manner. There was even a bizarrely introduced female character halfway through a gruesome trench battle.

Probably the worst thing about the game is that Rebellion are the people who made *Aliens vs Predator* and who will, apparently, be making a third game in that hallowed series. If *Shellshock 2* is the sort of game they're producing now, God help us.

David Brown



Always make sure a
corpse is really a
corpse, not a zombie.

PCZONE
32
Shellshocking

STATE OF PLAY

Every month we cast fresh eyes on the changes in long-running games made by their tinkering developers...

THIS MONTH...

LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE

PUBLISHER Turbine WEBSITE lotro-europe.com PRICE £19.99 then £12.99 a month

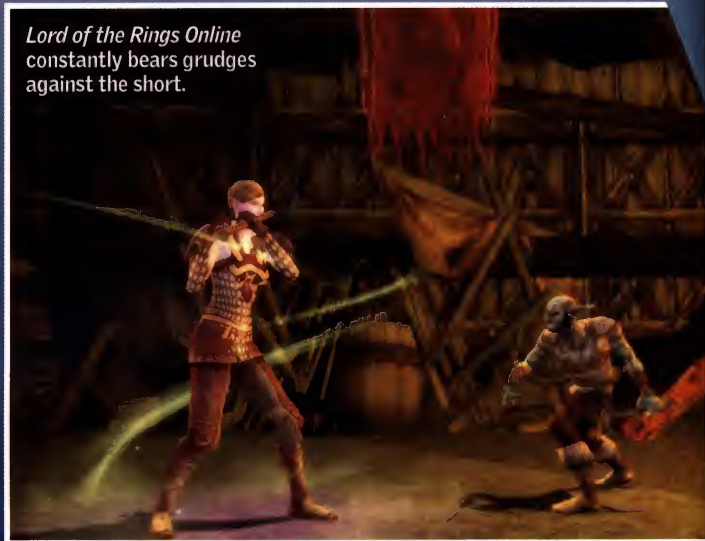
USING SOME OF the most controversial source material possible – the much-loved and fiercely-protected *Lord of the Rings* – Turbine have managed to craft the most story/quest-driven MMO in existence. *Lord of the Rings Online* has, since its release in April 2007, been one of the few games to deliberately funnel players down particular narrative-driven quest chains (apart from Turbine's own *Dungeons & Dragons: Stormreach*), rather than throw them into a rather intimidating world and say "go nuts". Some may call it linear, but the story-based structure of *LOTRO* is what gives it its power.

While most *State of Plays* gloss over the fact that many MMOs fail to provide regular, free and substantial upgrades to the gameworld, *LOTRO* prides itself on a regular influx of new content. Since its release, there have been seven large-scale updates to the

game amongst the regular balance and bug-fix updates that not only added to the game, but continued the game's "epic storyline". This is a long-term quest that spreads over the course of *LOTRO*'s (first) 50 levels, leading up to the conclusion of the game's first Volume, *The Shadows of Angmar*, finished in *Book 15: The Daughter of Strife*. These updates were (and will continue to be) sizeable, adding more quests, areas and content to the already rather intimidating *LOTRO* world.

The updates (books) are sent out once every two months, and history has proven that Turbine are reasonably loyal to these timeframes. The first, *The Shores of Evendim*, added over 100 quests, new raid areas and items to raid for, and set the scene for most of the rest of the content. While the original game encouraged grouping and really experiencing the story-driven content, Turbine have released more

Lord of the Rings Online constantly bears grudges against the short.



hardcore/raid content, including the battle with a balrog. Please note – this is a balrog, rather than the Balrog, that you can fight in *The Mines of Moria*'s historic raid (issue 203, 85%).

The important (and slightly different) thing about the aforementioned subterranean expansion is that the best of it is found from being the highest level in *Angmar*'s content. This isn't just because you'll have more content to grind through, à la *Wrath of the Lich King*, but because the storyline relies on the fact that you'll have a group of

buddies to thrash through the higher level content with. Much of the latter parts of *LOTRO* relies on the player having a few good men to bother the various monsters on the way to level 60. While this is where the multiplayer part of MMO comes in, it can be frustrating having to rely on having made reliable friends to advance through the content.

All the same, *LOTRO* currently has some of the finest dedicated storytelling in MMOs, and continues the rich tradition of whisking the player off on a wild adventure. Where *Northrend* fails to engage, the new content in *Moria* will win over anybody who left *LOTRO* at a reasonably high level. Failing that, those willing to rush to level 10 will find a slew of PvP content in *Monster Play* and *The Ettenmoors*. If you want to, you can battle against level 40 and higher players as a monster, leveling and gaining deeds as you go – it's a great distraction from the main game when it becomes a tad stale.

The only problem with *LOTRO* is that, in this industry, it's not stunningly different from *WOW* or *Warhammer*



"I can't even bring myself to make a stature joke at my own expense."

"Some may call it linear, but the story-based structure of *Lord of the Rings Online* is what gives it its power"



Online, other than its environments are made with bit more care. The source material is lovingly developed, but the game itself can tend to be repetitive and just not as tight as its competitors. Nevertheless, it also tends to be more satisfying, especially considering how much story-based content there is for both new players and those returning from hiatus.

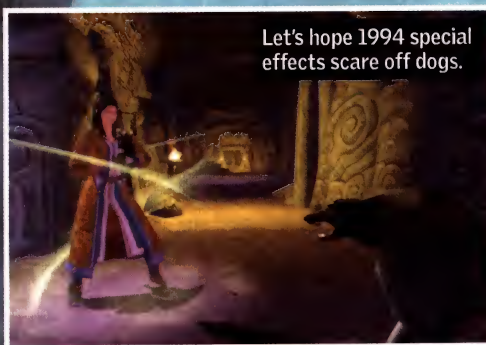
The Mines of Moria is a worthy expansion, and the *LOTRO* world is worth a bash even for newbies, and definitely deep enough to spend more time with if you were initially impressed. The Rune Keeper and Warden classes add a bit more soloability to the game, and the storyline is one of the better ones in PC gaming, even if it does err on the cheesy. The new raid encounters will sate the wannabe hardcore generation, and even

the more casual player will enjoy a jaunt into the earlier content.

Whether or not you return is mostly up to how well you ingest the *Lord of the Rings* content. The high fantasy nature of Turbine's work hasn't changed, and it's not set to. But on the upside, it will grow and evolve over the next few years. **PCZ**



"When I hold it like this, it tingles. I think it's raid-related."



Let's hope 1994 special effects scare off dogs.

VERDICT

Return to Middle-earth if you were cynical, and rush back if you have a character idling. *LOTRO* isn't stunning, but it's certainly worth taking a longer look than you may have in the past. **Ed Zitron**

THE STORY SO FAR... LORD OF THE WRONGS

THE ROCKY ROAD OF
LOTRO'S CREATION



2002

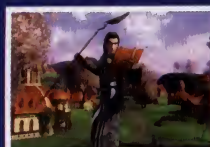
IN THE BEGINNING...

Middle-earth Online begins its tumultuous journey to reality, with a series of murky-looking screenshots that say very little about the game.

2003

THE FELLOWSHIP FOUNDED

Several development teams latch onto *Middle-earth Online*, including a little-known team involving Scott Hartsman, former *EverQuest* and *EverQuest 2* developer.



2004

THE FELLOWSHIP BROKEN

Turbine wrestles the rights to *Lord of the Rings Online* away from Vivendi, and begins developing the game on their lonesome.

2007

THE QUEST BEGINS

Turbine releases *LOTRO* across the world, working with Codemasters (and their Online Gaming wing) to release it to the babbling UK masses.



JUNE 2007

BOOK DELIVERY

Turbine releases the first content update, *Shores of Evendim*, two months after release, beginning a trend they've stuck to rigidly since the game's release.



2008

SPEAK FRIEND...

Turbine releases the *Mines of Moria*, adding two new classes, new quests, raids, and the second Volume of the *Lord of the Rings Online* saga.

BUDGET

Cheap, outdated, old-fashioned and a waste of time and money – that's *David Brown*

**BUDGET
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**

ARX FATALIS

PUBLISHER Good Old Games WEBSITE gog.com PRICE \$5.99 (about £4.10)

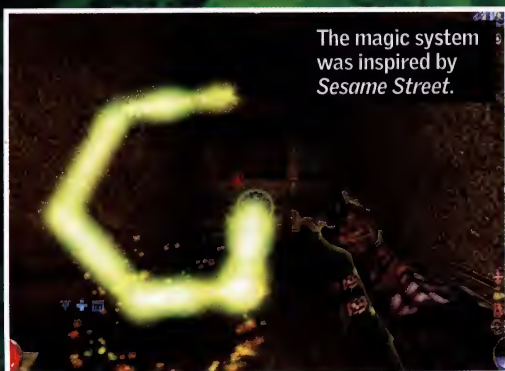
ANY GAME STEEPED in the traditions of *Ultima Underworld* is worthy of continued attention, especially when it rocks up on Good Old Games. In fact, *Arx Fatalis* was intended to be *Ultima Underworld III*, but developers Arkane (responsible for *Dark Messiah* and the upcoming *The Crossing*) were unable to secure the licence.

Set in a world where people are forced to live underground because of the planet's sun has failed, *Arx* was innovative back in the day, with a rune drawing system implemented by using sketching out the outline of a spell's symbol in mid-air. You could select the spell without bothering with the runes business, but where's the fun in that?

The game also follows a part-linear/part open-ended plot path, with the

main quest, involving killing some guy called Akbaa, was supplemented by some side quests that allowed for more freedom of thought.

The graphics haven't been too kindly treated by time, but the fundamentals of the *Arx Fatalis* remain as solid as ever. And remember, this is the closest you are likely to ever get to playing *Ultima Underworld III*.



**PCZONE
75**
Fun in the caves

**THIS
MONTH
PCZONE
SAVED MONEY BY...**



Steve being housed, fed and watered by PRs while in the US.
Saving: **\$1,000**

Prod ed Richard giving up his gym membership to gorge on chips and chocolate.
Saving: **£40 a month**



Dave not being able to come to work because of the snow.
Saving: **£30**

GOTHIC II GOLD

PUBLISHER Good Old Games WEBSITE gog.com PRICE \$5.99 (about £4.10)

SOME SAY THIS is the last *Gothic* game worth playing. Nevertheless, *Gothic II* has been particularly hard hit by the passage of time, with visuals that weren't great for their time now looking decidedly rosey. The voice acting is also a sticking point, as it's best described as workmanlike. Less diplomatic people might also describe the English vocalisation as insulting and abominable.

However, the game itself is still decent enough, with a reasonable plot about the island of Khorinis being on the brink of civil war, in which you are forced to choose sides in.

There's a lot to do and to see, but you might want to consider the *Gothic III*, or just wait for number four.

**PCZONE
64**



STRONGHOLD CRUSADER

PUBLISHER Good Old Games WEBSITE gog.com PRICE \$5.99 (around £4.10)



It's market day. Holy relics will be on offer.



Seiges involve a lot of standing around.

BEFORE I PLAYED *Stronghold* for this review, the only thing I knew about it was that you could catapult dead cows over the walls of a castle, causing disease and despair within if the corpse was left rotting for a while. In fact, I was tempted to

give the game a good mark just for that. But what I found was a genuinely decent strategy game.

Crusader uses the tried-and-tested *Stronghold* gameplay of building a castle and defending it against repeated attacks and sieges, while constructing

a thriving community within your fortress' walls. The twist with this edition is the action takes place the Middle East, making Saracens and Sassanids the foes you must face.

PCZONE
70

PAINKILLER: BLACK EDITION

PUBLISHER Good Old Games WEBSITE gog.com PRICE \$9.99 (about £6.90)

PAINKILLER WAS GREAT fun when it came out and it still is, to an extent. Hundreds of enemies, a gun that can pin foes to the walls with large wooden stakes, and huge bosses that tower above you into the sky (or whatever passes for sky in hell), and the colourful graphics have a charm of their own.

The problem is, the gameplay is just so dated and repetitive we can't really recommend it, even at this low price. If you do try it, you'll have fun for a bit,

but you'll probably end up bored after a few hours. I know I was. The thing is, I have fond memories of this game, but now they've been blighted by having the rose-tinted spectacles torn from my bloodied face.

If you want *Painkiller*, you should get *NecroVisioN* instead (205, 64%). It isn't much more expensive, and it was made by some of the same people who made this classic FPS.

PCZONE
59

And the rest...

The other cheap releases out now



MEDAL OF HONOUR: ALLIED ASSAULT DELUXE

£4.88, Mastertronic
Looks shite, but the magic is still there. Play it, if you haven't yet.

PCZONE
75



IN COLD BLOOD

\$5.99 (£4.10), Good Old Games
Revolution's blotted copybook remains forever stained by this utterly average adventure game.

PCZONE
49



WAXWORKS

\$5.99 (£4.10), Good Old Games
OK, it's rubbish and dated, but this is one of the scariest and most unnerving ever made.

PCZONE
50

PCZONE Top 5 budget games



ROME: TOTAL WAR - GOLD EDITION II

PRICE £15, SEGA

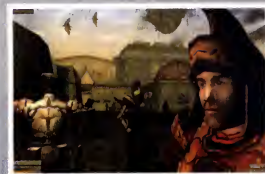
This is huge-scale RTS warfare at its very finest. Imagine thousands of people hacking each other to shit and back.



FAR CRY

PRICE £5, Sold Out

With *Far Cry 2* out it's time for the rock-hard original to take the spotlight again. The second-best FPS ever made.



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

PRICE £5, Mastertronic

If RPG is your favourite genre, you could do a lot worse (or, in *Oblivion's* case, slightly worse) than this epic, sprawling classic.



PSYCHONAUTS

PRICE £10, Steam

Here's Tim Schafer's psychological platform adventure. You won't have more fun until *Brütal Legend* comes out. If it ever does.



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

PRICE £5, Sold Out

That's all the genres covered, isn't it? RTS, FPS, RPG, platformer and pirate. Yep, that's really everything.

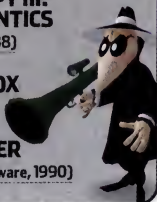
BUYER'S GUIDE

Don't stop buying them until they're bought



PCZONE Top 5 CHILLING GAMES

- 1 **ARCTIC MOVES**
(Dinamic Multimedia, 1995)
- 2 **TRANSARCTICA**
(Silman, 1993)
- 3 **SPY VS SPY III: ARCTIC ANTICS**
(First Star, 1988)
- 4 **ARCTIC FOX**
(EA, 1986)
- 5 **MIDWINTER**
(Rainbird Software, 1990)



PCZONE Top 5 UNDERRATED GAMES FROM THE PAST

- 1 **LANDS OF LORE: THE THRONE OF CHAOS**
(Virgin, 1992)
- 2 **SUBSPACE**
(Virgin Interactive, 1998)
- 3 **ELDER SCROLLS ADVENTURE**
(Bethesda, 1998)
- 4 **ROBOTWAR**
(MUSE Software, 1981)
- 5 **DEUTEROS**
(Activision, 1991)



PCZONE Top 5 UNSEXY SEXY GAMES

- 1 **SEXY BEACH 2**
(Try to shag anime girls)
- 2 **DR. RUTH'S COMPUTER GAME OF GOOD SEX**
(Text-based quiz by the sexologist)
- 3 **SEXONIX**
(Qix, with semi-nude ladies)
- 4 **SEX VIXENS FROM SPACE**
(Porn for cowards)
- 5 **BIING!: SEX, INTRIGUE AND SCALPELS**
(Gory Carry On Doctor)



FPS

Must buy!



HALF-LIFE 2 + EPISODES
PCZ Issues: 148 (97%), 170 (91%), 187 (82%)

Excelling in terms of action, storyline, emotion and ingenious set pieces, the continuing adventures of Gordon Freeman have yet to be equalled. Yes, a moderate amount of the action has faded through repetition by the time the episodes kick in, but with its Combine-defying freedom fighting, this is still the most finely crafted shooter experience ever released on PC. Gordon's alive, and long may he remain so.



LEFT 4 DEAD
PCZ Issue: 202 - 93%

The only thing the PCZ staff enjoys more than shooting zombies is shooting zombies as a team. And that's what *L4D* has - endless killing of mindlessly murderous plague victims, while you chortle and scream with your buddies.



TEAM FORTRESS 2
PCZ Issue: 187 - 93%

Beautifully balanced and engaging, Valve's update of the classic mod is a triumph, bringing together everything that's good about online shooters and topping it all off with superb animation that rivals the best Pixar's films.



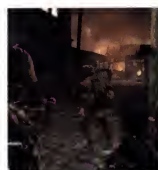
CRYSIS WARHEAD
PCZ Issue: 199 - 92%

The standalone expansion may only take a few hours to complete, but it re-ins in the harsh system demands of the original, and contains a few moments of fantastic action storytelling, and improved alien AI.



FAR CRY 2
PCZ Issue 201 - 90%

A triumph of non-linear gameplay, *Far Cry 2* offers an astounding chunk of Africa in which to play with guns, flames and explosions. The residents are too tenacious, but in a world this well-realised, you won't care.



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE
PCZ Issue: 188 - 89%

Big, brash and extremely loud, Infinity Ward's latest ultra-intense shooter offers some strikingly original military action. With superb multiplayer in tow, it's often an utter delight to play.



BIO SHOCK
PCZ Issue: 185 - 96%

The pson of *System Shock 2*, *BioShock* will suck you right into its intricate, art deco world. A destroyed Utopia under the sea, terrifying characters and emergent combat make this an unmissable experience.

Strategy

Must buy!



COMPANY OF HEROES
PCZ Issue: 173 - 93%

Despite hailing from that most overpopulated of genres, the WWII RTS, *Company of Heroes* is still number one is a testament to how utterly refined and slick it is. Relic have taken the best bits from strategy games and stripped out the crap, leaving you with a game that's fun, intelligent, accessible, taxing, tactical and exciting. And with so many positives in one sentence, you know it must be good.



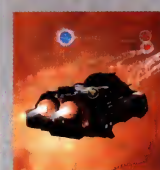
WORLD IN CONFLICT
PCZ Issue: 186 - 92%

A stunning RTS set at the height of the Cold War, offering innovative online play, a solid single-player campaign, jaw-dropping graphics and the best nuclear blast you've seen.



CIVILIZATION IV
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%

A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry place, and the latest version is the greatest yet. Now with added warmongering and diplomacy thanks to the expansion packs.



SINS OF A SOLAR EMPIRE
PCZ Issue 193 - 91%

This startling beauty came from nowhere, and quickly converted us from indifferent idiots into grateful idiots by surprising us with accessible complexity.



MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 175 - 91%

A blend of maniacal plotting on the strategic map and cheering with delight as your warriors collide spectacularly with your opponents' armies. Middle Ages war fun.



RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS
PCZ Issue: 168 - 91%

Takes the great gameplay of *RON*, improves on it with elements from *Civ IV* and wraps the whole lot in a gorgeous sci-fi setting. An RTS bursting with innovation.



SUPREME COMMANDER
PCZ Issue: 179 - 88%

Huge battles of thousands of air, sea and land units? Giant stompy robots and a superb tactical map? One of the most original RTS titles around? Check, check and check.

Action/Adventure

Must buy!



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV
PCZ Issue: 203 - 91%

We PC users have had to wait a while before we could return to Liberty City with Niko Bellic, but the delay has been worth it. This version of *GTA4* adds graphics that are a cut above those on consoles, expanded multiplayer modes, and an exclusive video editor to Liberty City's free-roaming world and the sure-to-be-classic storyline of Bellic's American dream becoming an American nightmare.



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

Showing its wrinkles a bit now, but it shows how to do bullet-time right. Noirish tone, a growling voice-over and remarkable gun action mean that Payne is still a force to contend with.



GEARS OF WAR
PCZ Issue: 188 - 90%

GOW's tactical battles and toughness make you fear the bullets flying around you. With the climatic Brumak battle, the PC has the best version of this excellent shooter. Shame we'll never see *GOW2*.



FAHRENHEIT
PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%

Murder most foul, and you're the killer. Boasts a twisting, turning, brilliantly told story, featuring multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



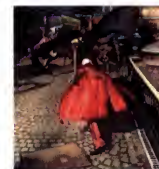
PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillis is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



DEVIL MAY CRY 4
PCZ Issue 197 - 82%

Best played on a pad - but entirely comfortable on the keyboard - this is long hours of insane hack 'n' slash action and doolally cutscenes. Expect huge boss fights and an exhilarating slog through massive crowds of demons.

MMOs

Must buy!



WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%
Blizzard's recreation of Azeroth doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to watch, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



LOTR ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 182 - 87%
A near-perfect recreation of Tolkien's tales, with solid combat and engaging plots, in a tasty MMO bundle. Meet Gandalf! Play as a hobbit or a spider! Middle-earth awaits...



WARHAMMER ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 200 - 92%
Mythic slips *Warhammer* into their realm vs realm template. Even the most reluctant PvPer will launch themselves into huge open warfare scenarios. Brilliant.



GUILD WARS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%
How to make a gaming accessible to the masses. A lot of thought has been applied, and there are no subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home, thanks to a totally skills-based setup.



EVE ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%
Elite online has been a long-held fantasy, and this space sim has come the closest yet to making it a reality. A slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining to trading to piracy.

Sport



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2009
PCZ Issue: 202 - 90%
Another season passes and another *Football Manager* appears. This time a 3D match engine and dealing with PRs and the media are new to this addictive football manager sim.



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008
PCZ Issue: 188 - 87%
Still in a different league to *FIFA*, *PES* lacks the official stamp but offers amazingly lifelike football. Whether it's end-to-end stuff or a nil-nil slog, it's always compelling.



NBA 2K9
PCZ Issue: 203 - 87%
Basketball will never be as popular as football in the sports games stakes, but *NBA 2K9* deserves to be played. This is a superb recreation of America's second-favourite sport that won't disappoint on any front.



FOOTBALL MANAGER LIVE
PCZ Issue: 205 - 85%
All the fun of *Football Manager* with added MMO fun. Build your own team from scratch and develop your manager's skills, to let you take on other managers around the world.



FIFA 08
PCZ Issue: 188 - 80%
A veritable compendium of all that is football, and a good sports game too, the recent *FIFA* still lags behind *PES*, but benefits from layers of EA spit and polish. A decent variant of the beautiful game.

Simulation

BUDGET



X²: REUNION
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%
Finally, a space sim to better *X²: The Threat*, and it just happens to be the sequel. This is possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Oh, and it plays pretty well to boot. Why not get reunited?



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES
PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%
While flight sims are getting rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None are more impressive than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR X
PCZ Issue: 175 - 89%
This latest iteration in the *Microsoft Flight Sim* series is the biggest since they started using actual polygons. What's more, the visuals may just sear your eyeballs.



FREELANCER
PCZ Issue: 128 - 84%
If *X²* is too slow for you, *Freelancer* should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



SILENT HUNTER 4: WOLVES OF THE PACIFIC
PCZ Issue: 181 - 82%
If a life beneath the waves tickles your fancy, then this submarine simulator fits the bill. Tactics, torpedoes, sonar and sailors combine to make the ultimate ship-sinker.

Driving/Racing

Must buy!



GTR2
PCZ Issue: 173 - 92%
Pick up this scarily realistic driving sim and race the car of your dreams. It comes with an improved driving model, new game modes and many other improvements.



RACE DRIVER: GRID
PCZ Issue: 195 - 88%
Codemasters moves the series from its historical simulation roots, strips off the *TOCA* and creates a Hollywood-realistic game with plenty of play modes and global challenges.



LIVE FOR SPEED
PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%
Online racing at its best. *LFS* has realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. A remarkable achievement by such a small and talented team.



COLIN MCRÆ: DIRT
PCZ Issue: 183 - 88%
This time the rallying legend treats us to a host of other off-road events, an excitable Travis Pastrana and some of the best-looking graphics to grace any driving game on PC.



GT LEGENDS
PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%
While *GTR* takes care of modern-day racing, *GT Legends*, a successor to *Grand Prix Legends*, does the business for historical driving. It's like the swinging '60s never ended.

Oddball

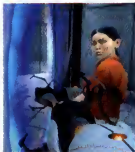
Must buy!



SPORE
PCZ Issue: 199 - 95%
This is four charming mini-games and an excellent space strategy game, glued together with a bunch of creation kits. It's also a beautiful one-off that is so well-realised that you should experience it yourself.



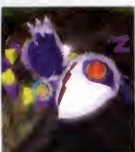
WORLD OF GOO
PCZ Issue 201 - 90%
A stroke of indie genius, *World of Goo* is a puzzler in which you erect fantastic goo-based structures across a myriad of unique and intriguing levels. Novel at every turn, *World of Goo* is simply irresistible.



PORTAL
PCZ Issue: 187 - 89%
Ingenious and absurdly funny, *Portal* is a four-hour slice of perfect puzzles and discovery. Hurling yourself through floors and walls sounds odd, but modern games are rarely more delightful.



GARRY'S MOD
PCZ Issue: 179 - 88%
The god game-like *Garry's Mod* gives you the tools to create almost anything you can think of in the Source engine, from working robots to saucy ragdoll JPEGS. Fun and easy to use, try it out and see for yourself.



VIVA PIÑATA
PCZ Issue: 190 - 85%
Madder than a mercury-blooded clown, *Viva Piñata* looks simple but is a ridiculously addictive animal-raising sandbox game. Don't be put off by the kiddie-looking graphics - it's a keeper.

Role-playing games

Must buy!



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
PCZ Issue: 167 - 95%
Oblivion's sublime graphics, intuitive character-creation and massive freeform gameplay put paid to the myth that you have to own a beard to enjoy RPGs.



MASS EFFECT
PCZ Issue: 195 - 92%
Possibly BioWare's best game since *KOTOR*, with a new combat system that makes it feel a bit less RPG. Great story, fine action, brilliant dialogue and space sex - it's a modern must.



THE WITCHER
PCZ Issue: 188 - 88%
Adult and intelligent, the world of *The Witcher* is as fascinating as it is violent and corrupt. With moral bite and an epic story, this has come out of nowhere to revive an ailing genre.



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%
This could be the most intimidating, yet wonderful, game we've ever played - the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.



DEUS EX
PCZ Issue: 93 - 94%
This is the benchmark in FPS RPGs. A twisting plot, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama ensure *Deus Ex* remains the alpha male of gaming.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

April

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2009
THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA
COMPANY OF HEROES: TALES OF VALOR
DEMIGOD
FALLOUT 3 DLC: THE PITT
THE GODFATHER II

EIDOS
ATARI
THQ
ATARI
BETHESDA
EA

May

ARMED ASSAULT II
FUEL
VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

505 GAMES
CODEMASTERS
SEGA

June

CHAMPIONS ONLINE
GHOSTBUSTERS: THE VIDEO GAME
HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF BLOOD PRINCE
RED FACTION GUERRILLA
THE SIMS 3

ATARI
ATARI
EA
THQ
EA

Spring

HEROES OVER EUROPE
SAM & MAX SEASON 2

ATARI
ATARI

Summer

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING
OVERLORD II

CODEMASTERS
CODEMASTERS

Autumn

COLIN MCRÆ DIRT 2

CODEMASTERS

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**OPERATION
FLASHPOINT 2**
Hands-on at the front line

MAKE YOUR OWN
GAME IN **24 HOURS!**
BE A PRO GAMER:
E-SPORTS EXCLUSIVE!
WORLD OF GOO
CREATOR SPEAKS OUT

★ **THREE NEW GAMES!** ★

BATTLEFIELD IS BACK!

- 1 BATTLEFIELD 1943**
The online classic reborn!
- 2 BATTLEFIELD HEROES**
Why free gaming is the future
- 3 BAD COMPANY 2**
Singleplayer Battlefield?

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WORLD OF GOO TEAM SPEAK OUT! > NETBOOKS TESTED > MUCH MORE

NEW ISSUE ON SALE **NOW**



PCZONE HARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

ByeSkyBye

AS PROMISED I canned my Sky subscription, the protracted and rather embarrassing conversation I had with the desperate sounding man on Sky's helpdesk suggesting that I'm not alone in doing so.

Wake up and smell the coffee, BSkyB. Your business model still reeks of the '80s, and much of what you charge £200 per year for is available free-to-air: Freeview, FreeSat, and everyone with a PC.

An additional £120 per year for Sky+ is a joke when we can buy a £74 digital TV recorder from Tesco and be done with it. Or click the Windows Media Center icon and enjoy the exact same PVR features – only with limitless hard drive space courtesy of USB, and some *Peggle* for the wife.

What makes your charges all the more silly is that bargain bin hard disk recorders, such as Tesco's, are made by Thomson – the same people who make your Sky+ boxes.

And while many people might pay £10 monthly for the option to watch all 633 channels in high-definition, only a tiny, idiot minority will keep coughing up a tenner each month to watch less than 5% of those in HD.

In the run up to Christmas, you said you'd added 171,000 new subscribers. My money's on you losing them all before the summer to other platforms – broadband and gaming are recession-proof, and advert drenched pay-TV isn't.

Handy

Phil Wand
Hardware editor

THINGS CAN ONLY GET CHEAPER

PC hardware down, but only if the pound goes up

A GLOBAL RECESSION needn't spell doom and gloom for consumers. As demand recedes, so prices come down, and it could be cheaper than ever to build a high-performance PC.

With budget LCD sales now higher than those of premium counterparts, the value of high-end screens could tumble. And while Intel have ruled out any cost shaving before May, they have begun selling their solid-state drives bundled with a Core i7 at a 15% discount.

With suppliers bogged down by huge inventories, the need to clear old stock has become paramount – look out for cashbacks and other retail incentives over the next few months, particularly from struggling HP.

We could also see better value NVIDIA hardware. The company is rumoured to be allowing other companies to design and manufacture its boards, meaning that budget makers well-versed in the art of cost-cutting could soon be building your next GeForce. Add in cheaper RAM and things look even rosier.

The problem is the weakness of the pound. Unless it strengthens, prices of imports are just as likely to go up as down.



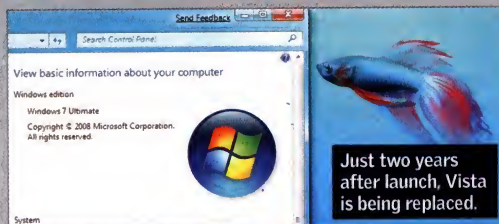
Can price cuts woo customers to buy flatpanel TVs?

WINDOWS 7 BY JUNE

Last stage of testing for new Vista

With a release candidate likely to be released at the beginning of April, we expect a new Windows 7 release before the summer holidays.

At least a beleaguered computer industry would like to hope so, as the release of a new operating system generates an excitement that drives sales. Microsoft will get people cracking open wallets – not because they need a new PC, but because there's a genuine buzz about leaving both XP and the poorly-received Vista behind.



Just two years after launch, Vista is being replaced.

You can be sure that once the candidate is made available, I'll be testing its performance with every game under the sun – keep reading to find out if it's really worth upgrading. If you want to test the beta or release candidate yourself, pay a visit to snipurl.com/win7beta microsoft.co.uk

News round-up

Dell's XPS 625 is getting good reviews, but exercise caution. The £779 model has AMD's Phenom X3 8750, a 500GB hard drive and an HD 4670. Select a model that'll see you into next year (Phenom II X4 940, 750GB RAM and Radeon 4850) the price rises to £1,139. dell.co.uk

Rumours say that ATI's next-gen RV790 GPU is its RV770 chip (as seen in HD 4870) with the clocks set higher. This doesn't matter, as for the first time in years, ATI is level pegging its rival and doesn't need to pull out the big guns. ati.amd.com

WARNING:
THIS MONTH'S
HARD WORDS

BY STEVE HOGARTY

FUSION REMOTE: A means of controlling your nuclear reactor from the comfort of your sofa. No more having to stand up and fiddle with uranium rods by hand. **COOLERMASTER:** Sure the bad lad in *Karate Kid* had a cool master, but Mister Miyagi was easily the cooler master? **HDMI:** "STFU, STFU, you HDMI at ELO." **MINI 12:** A posher alternative to After Eights, Mini Twelves are half as big and twice as minty fresh. **HARD DRIVE JUMPERS:** Jumpers for hard drives. You know, like woolen jumpers. That's the joke. If you don't think it's clever enough then sod off. Go on, close the magazine and just go.



DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



PROBLEMS?

Mistook your wardrobe for the toilet again? Local shop stopped stocking your favourite

blue-flavoured Pringles? Been playing *WOW* so long your partner's left you? We can't help with those setbacks (no, not even the Mighty Wandy), but we can solve all your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything, and he's willing to help if you email him at: wandy@dearwandy.com, including as much info as you can and system specs where applicable.



HDDs have labels explaining how you should arrange their jumpers.

Q BOOT HILL

I've a small problem with an hard disk drive I found in a discarded PC. It's a Seagate ST320014A with a copy of *Windows XP* on it. The trouble is, after I fitted it, it asked me whether to boot into the last known good configuration or Safe Mode. No matter what I choose it just continuously reboots.

M J McSherry

A The drive you've added is booting before your existing system disk. Change the boot order in your BIOS, and be sure to leave the ST320014A lower down the list. As it's an old IDE drive you should also check that you've correctly set the jumpers on the back – if you've connected it to the existing cable, one drive needs to be set as "master" and the other as "slave".

Q HIGH DETAIL, MANY IGNORANT

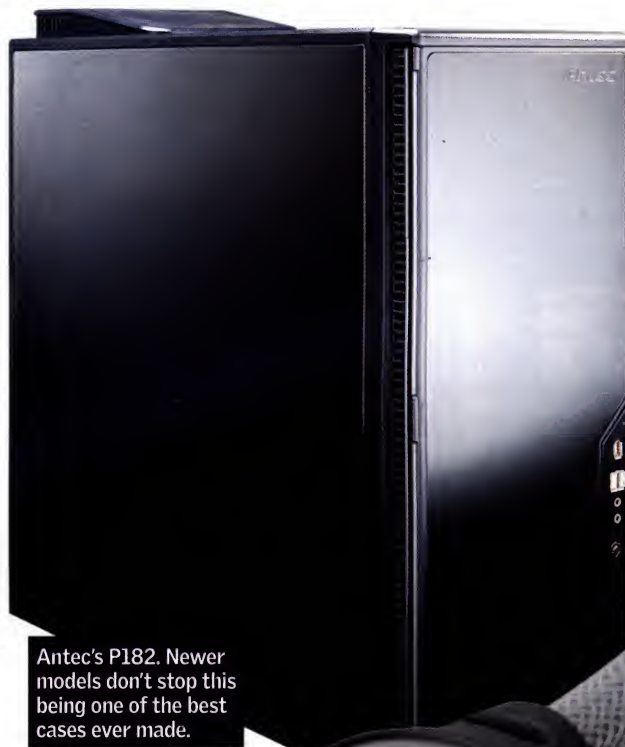
I've become really confused over what HDMI cable I should buy to link my laptop up to my TV.

I know that I want the latest version, v1.3b, but they all vary in price. When looking online there are many different opinions, with some saying these cables have less noise and some people claiming it's a con. I would like some clarification.

Luke Uzoziri

A The problem with HDMI is that everyone finds it all hopelessly confusing. As with any universalising technology, the core intention of keeping things simple has been overtaken by a wearisome desire to continually improve. As well as making you feel disorientated, this also means that the cable you buy today won't necessarily be compatible with the products you buy tomorrow. Isn't that great?

The original HDMI concept was essentially a single digital wire that you could use to hook item A to item B without the need to tie your brain in knots understanding it. You just needed to know that both items had HDMI connectors. That was it. It was to be genuine plug-and-play connectivity for legions of baffled consumers, each of whom wanted to lash their many and varied audio-visual equipment (PCs, TVs,



Antec's P182. Newer models don't stop this being one of the best cases ever made.



Not all cables are created equal.

consoles, music and home cinema systems) together but didn't know how.

The problem is that there are now a number of different versions of HDMI cables, together with different categories that dictate how much data the wire is capable of holding. My advice is that you look for the cable with the widest compatibility and thus the one that will last you longest: version 1.3 or better marked as certified (usually a reference to the item having achieved HDMI Compliance Test Specification) and

identified as either "High Speed" or "Category 2". They aren't expensive.

As long as these bases are covered, it doesn't matter if a cable comes wrapped around the thighs of Scandinavian virgins, coated in precious metals. Buy the cheapest you can find and avoid products that omit the details above.

Q A CASE OF CASES

I'm about to build myself a new games machine and can't decide on the case. Is the Antec P182 still all that?

DRIVER WATCH

GRAPHICS

| MANU | DESC | RELEASED |
|--------|------------------|-----------|
| ATI | CATALYST 91 | 29 JAN 09 |
| NVIDIA | FORCEWARE 181.22 | 22 JAN 09 |

SOUND

| MANU | DESC | RELEASED |
|----------|--------------------------|-----------|
| CREATIVE | X-FI BETA 2.18.0004 | 30 JUL 08 |
| CREATIVE | CREATIVE ALCHEMY 1.20.04 | 01 AUG 08 |
| CREATIVE | AUDIGY BETA 2.18.0001 | 17 JUL 08 |

"It doesn't matter if a cable is wrapped around the thighs of Scandinavian virgins, coated in precious metals"

"But don't buy something because it has 'silent', 'whisper' or 'hush' in its name. Not all quiet cases are quiet"

I'm planning to put a Core i7 and at least a Radeon HD 4870 in it, and I want a chassis that is silent, cool – as in well-ventilated – and possibly offering good cable management.

I'd also be happy to pay extra for any lacking plexiglass windows, ultraviolet light, or similar crap. Discreet is dear!

Hannibal Zembksi

A You could get dizzy just looking at the myriad quiet cases currently on the market. But don't buy something just because it has "silent", "whisper" or "hush" in its name. Not all quiet cases are quiet.

Antec's P182 is still regarded as one of the all-time greats, particularly for those such as yourself who prefer something that flies under the radar. I've built around Antec's Fusion Remote and their first-generation Sonata, both of which are excellent boxes, but I've yet to get my hands on the improved Sonata Plus 550.

My current favourites in terms of price and performance are the Akasa Mirage and Eclipse. They're both simple cases that are cheaper than the newer Omega design, yet just as satisfying to build into. Similarly, the CoolerMaster CM-690 is excellent value.

My first ever home-brew PC was created around a Lian Li, and so I've always had a soft spot for them. The PC-V1010B would be the one I'd choose from their current range, though I should warn you that they're not cheap.

You could also go the small form factor route, though I would say that I've yet to come across an small case that's as all-round quiet as an equivalent tower. They tend to sound fussy when you're pushing them, for the simple reason that everything is fighting to get cooling from a considerably smaller volume of air.

If you have a serious budget, the best case in existence is the £400 Supermicro SC743TQ-865-SQ, which not only comes

pre-plumbed with an 865W PSU but is also unnervingly quiet and has the build quality of a Maybach.

Q THE LAST CORE-RAH

With the arrival of Core i7 you seem to be getting a lot of these letters, but I want to throw my situation into the ring. I'm currently using an Intel D975XBX2 motherboard, E6850 Core 2 Duo, 4GB RAM and a GeForce GTX 280 graphics card. I feel the time is coming to upgrade the processor to one with a quad core. I thought about going for a new i7, but I think my motherboard has one more big upgrade left in it.

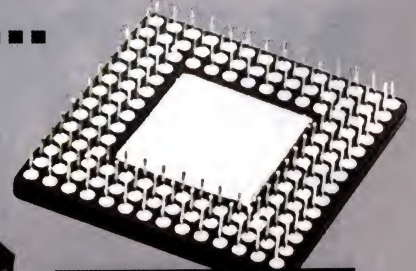
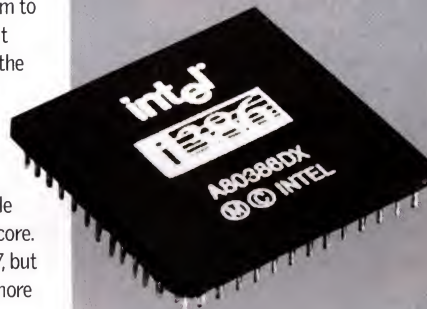
So really, I'm just looking for some sound advice on where to put my money. Ideally I want to get a processor which will give me good performance for 18 months or so before the inevitable switch to i7 happens. The rest of my setup seems pretty futureproof right now, so I'm willing to spend that little extra – I may even be pushed towards the QX9775 – to get the level of performance I desire.

Do the Extreme quads give a significant boost over the standard variants? And is the Extreme route the



Don't trust anything with the word "Extreme" printed on it.

ELEMENTARY LESSONS IN PC TECH...



The 386DX might be old, but it was capable of processing 8.5 million instructions per second.

12 PROCESSORS

The tasks your PC performs seem incredibly complicated, but each one can be broken down into steps involving calculations in binary. Strung together in their trillions, these equations make your computer work.

The first 8088 processors used in PCs were capable of carrying out just 800,000 instructions per second, such as adding, subtracting, comparing, and incrementing. Lists of the commands that its takes a processor to carry out these tasks are known as "instruction sets", as they instruct the CPU to behave in a certain way.

Think about the tasks your brain has to deal with as you flick through this magazine. Your hands have to hold the paper, you have to focus on words, and a loop moves your eyes across words to the end of lines and then back to the start of the next one down.

For every one of these tasks there is a corresponding group of much simpler muscle instructions that, when carried out in quick succession, give the effect of coordinated movement. These signals sent to your muscles are a form of instruction set: a series of basic commands that together form a highly complicated action.

way I should go to give me the future-proofing I want?

Michael Richards

Don't bother with the Extreme Edition QX9770. The £1,100 or so you need to buy one is more than enough to cover the cost of a faster Core i7 system, monitor included. Even the entry level 920 chips turn out bigger numbers in CPU benchmarks.

This leads me on to the fact that you're really not going to be able to get a replacement for your E6850 chip that meets all your criteria – in other words, be faster than what you have, be better

value than a new Core i7 system, and be able to satisfy you for 18 months.

If you have the money waiting – and your willingness to follow the Extreme route suggests that you do – I wouldn't throw good money after bad and would get the i7 system that gets in closest to your budget.

On the other hand, if you're thinking that the i7 range is limited right now and that you'd prefer to wait for more chips, spend £290 on a Q9650 – or a Q9550S if you're feeling green – and keep hold of the rest. You'll only end up getting poor value from spending extra money on new gear. **PCZ**

FORUMS:
DIRECT FROM
DEARWANDY.COM

(Surfdude) Has anyone got DOSBox to work on 64-bit Vista? The website says the version I have (0.72) should work, but I can't get any games to run under it. (ZaThRoS) Try D-fend. It's a front-end program with DOSBox at the backbone. I've found numerous games that I couldn't get going in DOSBox work a treat. (Coelicolour) I was able to install DOSBox on 64-bit Vista Home Premium last weekend, and have so far got Syndicate and Xenon 2 – to work on it just fine. (Surfdude) Cheers guys. I've gotten the most success with D-fend, I can now at least get the game running. I had to edit a config file as it was still looking for the speech on the CD.

HOW WE TESTED

We've rated these netbooks in terms of their toughness; whether their keyboard and trackpad have sacrificed comfort for compactness; their performance; and how long their batteries will last. We've also taken into account value for money, bearing in mind that the cost of netbooks has risen dramatically since they first appeared.

SAMSUNG NC10

PRICE £290

MANUFACTURER Samsung

WEBSITE samsung.com/uk/consumer

THE ADVANTAGE OF a 10in netbook over an 8.9in model is that the screen and keyboard are bigger. This makes reading and typing much more comfortable, and gaming on the go much easier.

The Samsung NC10 is bulky even for a large netbook, making us question its ultra-portable credentials. That said the keyboard is the best around for long periods of typing.

Samsung have chosen to stick with XP for the NC10's

OS, rather than a variant of Linux. While this is popular choice, and definitely the right one for gamers, there's a risk of your netbook slowing as XP's registry bloats up. But this does mean the NC10 will run resource-conservative games like *World of Goo*, *Football Manager*, and many titles available from Good Old Games (gog.com).

The NC10's other benefits are a long battery life, WiFi, and on-board Bluetooth.

An added bonus is this netbook is one of the few

SPECIFICATION

Processor: 1.6GHz Intel Atom N270

Screen: 10in, 1024x600

Hard drive: 160GB

Battery life: 6 hours



10in models available for under £300, which mitigates its few flaws. Not that there are many besides its hinge design not feeling as solid as some of its peers, and the mouse pad being a too small for comfort.

Overall this is an excellent ultra-portable PC, which is easily capable of running older games happily.

PCZONE
91
Good thing, small package

INSPIRON MINI 12

PRICE £399 MANUFACTURER Dell WEBSITE www1.euro.dell.com



THIS NETBOOK COMES in two flavours – this one, and one with a slightly slower CPU that runs *Ubuntu* (a Linux distribution).

With a 12in screen this PC is much bigger than other netbooks, but it's so well-designed it weighs less than the NC10. But the NC10's battery lasts twice as long, and it has double the hard drive capacity.

SPECIFICATION

Processor: 1.6GHz Intel Atom Z520

Screen: 12in, 1280x800

Hard drive: 80GB

Battery life: 3 hours

PCZONE
83

ADVENT 4211

PRICE £274 MANUFACTURER Advent WEBSITE pcworld.co.uk

THE ADVENT 4211 can't compete with the newer, slicker Samsung NC10 in terms of design.

The Samsung's keyboard and mouse feel much more grown-up and worth

every penny of the £15 extra it costs, and the 4211's battery life is terrible. That said, the NC10 isn't available for free when you buy a broadband dongle from PC World – the Advent is.

SPECIFICATION

Processor: 1.6GHz Intel Atom N27

Screen: 10in, 1024x600

Hard drive: 120GB

Battery life: 2 hours



PCZONE
85



PHENOM II X4 940

PRICE £188 MANUFACTURER AMD WEBSITE amd.com

LAST YEAR'S PHENOM was a disappointment, but this year's Phenom II is definitely not.

While this new CPU's die shrink design, increased clockspeed and enhanced cache capacity suggests only minor tweaks, our tests showed that this CPU can compete comfortably with the similarly priced Core 2 Q9400.

While this isn't a win for AMD (we still recommend older, cheaper Core 2s for self-builds systems) off-the-shelf Phenom II-based PCs are looking like a very good buy.

PCZONE
88



SPECIFICATION

Processor: 2.83GHz Intel Core 2 Quad Q9550
Screen: 17.1in, 1680x1050
Hard drives: max 3 (regular and solid-state)
Battery life: 2 hours

FUSION GENESIS SLI

PRICE £2,595 MANUFACTURER Chillblast WEBSITE chillblast.com

IF YOU WANT the best possible gaming laptop, this enormous 5.5kg monster is it, with two GeForce 9800M cards in SLI, RAID 0 hard drives, 4GB DDR II RAM and an Intel Quad Core CPU, packed inside.

While games fly on this machine, the only problem is they don't run faster than on similarly specced laptops with a slightly slower processors, which could save almost £1,000. As this is the basic model, you can't trade down to save cash, which could turn folks towards the likes of Alienware.

PCZONE
78



FATALITY HS1000

PRICE £45 MANUFACTURER Creative WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

DO PEOPLE STILL connect the brand Fatal1ty with the cyberathlete Jonathan Wendel? Perhaps. Have they ever made the connection? Maybe. Do we give a damn? No, but these Fatal1ty-branded 'phones from Creative are up to scratch.

Powered by a cut-down X-Fi audio chip, and a driverless USB connection, these cans deliver immersive surround sound, with superior 3D positioning of in-game effects. They're comfortable as well, and are able to shut out background noise effectively. However, the tone is too bass-heavy for them to be ideal.

PCZONE
83

WORLD OF WARCRAFT MMO GAMING MOUSE

PRICE (about £80) MANUFACTURER Steelseries WEBSITE steelseries.com/int



THERE'S ONE THING an MMO player really needs – mice with lots of buttons. So, nothing will be more useful to a Warcrafter than this mouse with 15 buttons that can be mapped to spells, macros and actions.

This large and comfortable rodent from Steelseries not only carries *Warcraft* branding, but has an excellent driver interface for tuning. This rodent is a boon for anyone with dexterous digits on their right hand, but it'll be too expensive for most.

PCZONE
85

REMEMBER:
DON'T DUMP
YOUR OLD PC IN
THE TRASH

While they may be getting greener, your old PC contains lots of chemicals that are nasty to the environment. So when you're upgrading, don't send your PC to the landfill – keep it, sell it or give it away. Unless you really do want to poison wildlife.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

We see plenty of new gear at *PC ZONE*, but these are the bits we just adore

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

N280GTX

PRICE £420

MANUFACTURER MSI
msicomputer.co.uk

Fast graphics don't come cheap, and NVIDIA's 200-series flagship is reassuringly expensive. There are four power modes on offer, PhysX support, and a batting average better than any other. Plus there's 1GB DDR3 and many other enhancements that deliver performance around 1.5x faster than any predecessor. Can your credit card handle it?



PROCESSOR



CORE 2 QUAD EE QX9775

PRICE £1,000

MANUFACTURER Intel
intel.co.uk

A silly price makes for awesome power and magical performance. Not only will your Extreme Edition chip cost you the same as several entire PCs, but like everything else in your PC it'll be obsolete within two years. If you've got the money, go crazy and give your PC a hot rod CPU.

MOTHERBOARD



D975XBX2

PRICE £155

MANUFACTURER Intel
intel.co.uk

Everything we adored about our long-time fave D975XBX, only with a thick coat of overclocking goodness. Intel's flagship desktop product represents all that's good about their products: solid, reliable, no-nonsense and fast. Saddle up with a Core 2 Duo and away you go!



WD7500 AAKS

PRICE £109

MANUFACTURER Western Digital
wdc.com

Almost as fast as the 150GB Raptor, but with five times the capacity and half the noise. Products like the WD7500AAKS and Hitachi's Deskstar 7K1000 are now so quick that you don't need to spend extra on 10,000rpm drives. So don't.

SCREEN



SM226BW

PRICE £219

MANUFACTURER Samsung
samsung.com/uk
The Samsung SM226BW is

handsome and fast (it has a grey-to-grey refresh rate of just 2ms) and has no hint of the motion sickness that plagued LCDs just a few years ago. It produces a bright, evenly lit image that's full of reverberant colours, sharp edges and dark blacks.

SOUND CARD



SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS

PRICE £130

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
uk.europe.creative.com

This is a slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles. With support for EAX 5.0 and 64MB X-RAM delivers top-quality sound effects in your games. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal.

SPEAKERS



Z-5500

PRICE £195

MANUFACTURER Logitech
logitech.co.uk
The price has dropped below £200 and these

speakers are simply the best we've ever tested. The soundtracks from both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself dusting off your old CDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

SKINT?

GRAPHICS

HD4850

PRICE £145

MANUFACTURER Sapphire
www.sapphiretech.com

This is the card that had arch-rival NVIDIA slashing prices in an effort to be competitive. Just £140 buys you a mainstream monster with performance that matches a GeForce 9800 GTX and snaps at the heels of the new N280GTX. Put the magazine down and buy one.



PROCESSOR



CORE 2 DUO E2180

PRICE £55

MANUFACTURER Intel
intel.co.uk

At the budget end of things, it's a tough choice between the E2180, E4500 and E8200. Unsurprisingly, things get faster the more you pay, but the E2180 here is a flexible engine that's great for gentle gaming or an overclocking frenzy.

MOTHERBOARD



CONROEXFIRE-ESATA2

PRICE £60

MANUFACTURER ASRock
asrock.com

Paired with an E6300, this ASRock motherboard can wring high-end performance from a budget rig. It features a 1066/800/533MHz FSB, SATA II with RAID, 7.1 HD audio onboard, CrossFire support, Gigabit LAN and ASRock's easy overclocking features.



CAVIAR 1600AAJS SATA-II

PRICE £30

MANUFACTURER Western Digital
wdc.com

A 160GB hard drive remains more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, Steam, a couple of thousand music files and the odd porn flick still leaves plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

SCREEN



VA903M

PRICE £118

MANUFACTURER ViewSonic
www.viewsonic.com
europe.com/uk
The VA903m is a

better bet than any of the similarly-priced widescreen variants as there are more pixels on its 19in screen: its 1280 x 1024 pixel panel offers greater depth than the standard 1440 x 900 panels of its peers.

SOUND CARD



SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

PRICE £20

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
uk.europe.creative.com

The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support. This card makes an awful lot of sense for casual gamers, as there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard.

SPEAKERS



X-530

PRICE £55

MANUFACTURER Logitech
logitech.co.uk
Logitech's X-530s have the edge on

quality and are available just about everywhere. This Swiss-designed 70W, 5.1 surround sound system offers Logitech build quality with superb sound in games, movies and music. And for £55 their value can't be beat.

Magazines
aren't for
reading...

they're for
reloading.



Get your ass kicked for free on the
mind-blowing jolt public servers or take complete
control with your own jolt clan server.

Take no prisoners. Accept no substitutes.
www.jolt.co.uk



PCZONE FREEPLAY

For the man who has nothing

What to say?

SOMETIMES WHEN YOU start these columns, your mind is on other things and you can't think of anything relevant to say about free games, maps, mods or anything like that. Kind of like right now. I mean, there's lots of stuff to talk about – stompy robots, fire escape simulators, purging the universe of all known Michael Bolton fans – but sometimes you just get into a sort of mind funk that prevents you from talking logically about things that you are supposed to. Especially when you are listening to ear-bleedingly heavy music while typing such words.

One thing I can talk about is how there seems to be a growing number of indie people remaking or updating classic adventures, like *Broken Sword 2.5* in last month's issue or *Quest for Glory II* in this one. The potential for such things is huge, as I mention overleaf, but just think about some of the other old games that could be resurrected from obscurity. *Police Quest*, *Maniac Mansion*, *Loom*, *Zak McKracken*, *Lure of the Temptress* and others, all crying out for a brave indie dev to take the plunge and redo them.

We can only hope that *Broken Sword 2.5* and *Quest for Glory II* make a mark on the scene and are popular enough to inspire others. In fact, all this talk of old adventure games has made me want to play them all over again. So, if you wonder where I am for the next few months, I'll be locked in a room, beaver away at *Return of the Phantom*, *Innocent Until Caught* and *Heart of China*. I'm sure my mouse hand will be withered to a stump by the time I finish.

David Brown,
Staff writer

NURTURING THE INDIES

Indie companies
run by a studio?
Paradoxical indeed

WEBSITE www.paradoxplaza.com

WE WENT TO Sweden a few weeks ago to meet some of Paradox Interactive's most promising development teams and see the games they were making (page 36). While there, we also talked to two indie companies Paradox are nurturing as they pursued dreams of gaming glory.

The first, Black Drop Studios, were demoing their curious little racing platformer, *Boingo* (boingo.se). In it, you control an orange blob-thing (when questioned on their choice of character, they said the backstory was still being thought up) who moves around a lavishly hand-drawn course by attaching himself to the environment and propelling himself in various directions, gaining momentum and avoiding other entities. "The basic ability is that you can jump and stick to any surface while making your way through a level," said Peter Lubeck, *Boingo*'s project manager.

"You can place yourself anywhere on the ceiling or the walls, plus you can wall-jump and air-jump, which allows you to change your direction in mid-air to avoid hazards. The wall-jump is a



0:06:928

No Oingo Boingo jokes around here.



"Mjao have made a point-and-click game that needs two people to play it"

combo-system – the better you time it, the more acceleration you'll gain."

The other game we got to see – *A Wikiped's Story* – is a little point-and-click adventure game with a twist: it's co-op. In a unique move, dev team Mjao have decided to make a point-and-click game that needs two people to play it.

"Think about how many people have a laptop with a trackball or touchpad, into which you can also plug a USB mouse," project manager Kristina Bjorkman said. "We think most people

do have two mice at home, so it's not a problem with the controls."

Jonas Abrahamsson, the game's lead programmer, agreed: "Also, because you are playing the game with your friend, he or she will also have a mouse that they can bring to use."

The game follows the story of an old man who is seeking to prove how the world ended 200 years before. He's trailed by his acolytes – the two characters the players control. There's time travel, an influence system that determines dialogue choices, and the games will be episodic. If Mjao can sharpen up the visual side of things, this could be one to look out for.



A co-op adventure?
Can it really work?

PCZONE
FREE-O-METER



0
HOURS

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



597
HOURS*

FIRE DOWN BELOW

It's official: gamers are stupidly suicidal

WEBSITE www.dur.ac.uk

WHAT DO YOU think of when you play *Half-Life 2*, or any of the other games based on the Source engine – *Left 4 Dead*, *Counter-Strike* et al. We'd hazard a guess that you think of either blowing people away with high-powered assault weapons, headshotting zombies with an automatic shotgun or defeating the Combine and the evil Dr Breen.

What some people might be thinking is, "Damn it, that fire escape isn't realistic. I wish somebody would use this lovely engine to recreate the thrills and spills of emergency exits". What a fool you would be if you thought that.

As you probably guessed by that long and pointless introduction, somebody has decided to use Source in planning fire escape routes, against perhaps both logic and any kind of sense. But nevertheless, this is what has happened.

Some people with egg-shaped skulls at Durham University have recreated their campus in the Source engine, with the aim of allowing staff and students to familiarise themselves with the locations of all the emergency exits and that sort of gubbins. The most comical thing about this piece of news is the way we gamers appear to interact with it.

Gamers choose to leap into the flames...



Apparently, those who aren't adept at using the old WASD keys walk calmly and sensibly to the exits and escape nice and safely. However, FPS gamers have a worrying tendency to play this safety device as one: that is, they leap headfirst into the flames and generally leap and run about like crazy, just like they would in a proper game.

Oh dear, it seems games do have a bad influence on us after all – we just don't take safety drills seriously. Sickening really, isn't it?



...while others use common sense.



Presumably, one of Durham Uni's students.

SNIPPETS



JUNGLE GAMES

WEBSITE snipurl.com/casualamazon
Amazon have decided to muscle in on this casual games lark, creating a digital distribution channel on their main website that offers a load of cheap games, all for less than a tenner. While it's not strictly free, but there might be something there for you.



PATCH EFFECT

WEBSITE masseffect.bioware.com
At the time of writing, BioWare had just made it known a new patch for epic space opera *Mass Effect* was on its way. It may well be with you all now, who knows. BioWare have said it will be addressing many issues raised by the *Mass Effect* community.

Bug Fix of the Month



THIS MONTH
STRONGHOLD
CRUSADER
EXTREME 1.2.1

"Fixed! 2,000 people standing on one tile in the game would crash the game."

MOVIE OF THE MONTH

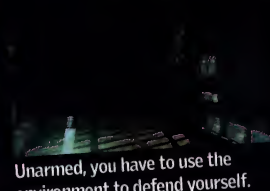
PENUMBRA COLLECTION
Possibly one of the most terrifying adventure games ever made, *Penumbra's* physics puzzles and a lack of weapons makes each play through a nerve-shredding experience. This series is very Lovecraftian, very scary and very good.



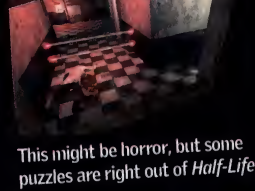
The developers intended to create claustrophobia in players.



Here, the player is partially blinded by paraffin.



Unarmed, you have to use the environment to defend yourself.



This might be horror, but some puzzles are right out of *Half-Life*.

Demos

Adam Glick takes you on a tour of this month's DVD

BURNOUT PARADISE: THE ULTIMATE BOX

Trial the full version of this excellent racing game for free!

WEBSITE criteriongames.com/packs/pc.php

HERE'S THE FULL version of *Burnout Paradise* (page 66-69) for free, and it being *The Ultimate Box* means you get all the updates and extras too. This means you can start wandering about the game for nothing, just by installing the game from your lovely cover disc.

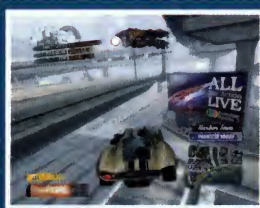
We do have to come clean. This version isn't totally free – after a certain amount of time, you'll be asked to pay for the game if you want to continue playing. But there's no real reason for complaint though. You are getting a full game for free, for a limited time. Just like we did in the days of shareware games. But what can you do in said game? You can get involved with normal races (get to a place on the map any way you want), Marked Man events (make your way to a location, while cars try to prevent you from doing so), and Road Rage (smash up a target number of cars within a time limit).

These are just a few of the things you'll be able to do. If you want more info, Steve's review on page 66 is the perfect place to go!

PCZONE

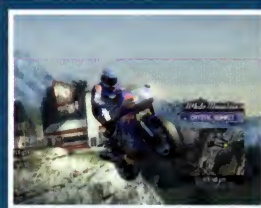
ON THE DVD

Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on 01225 442244 and ask for cover disc support. Or email support@futurenet.co.uk, including as much information as possible about your system and the Nature of your problem.



COMPLETE PACKAGE

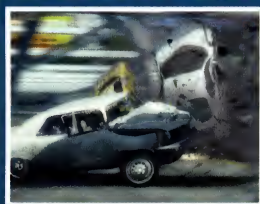
Inside *The Ultimate Box*, you get all the extra content packs that have been drip fed to console players since the game was initially released to the public.



FIRST TIMER

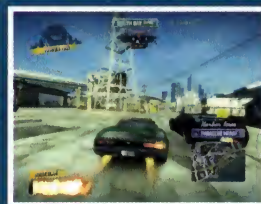
This is also the first *Burnout* for PCs, and it'll be more visually spectacular than previous versions. One interesting feature is the compatibility with multiple monitor setups.

BOGART, BIKES AND BURNOUTS



ARCADE FIRE

There aren't many other arcade racers that offer the freedom and excitement of *Burnout Paradise*, and such beautiful and stylised crashes. You've got no excuse, people.



SECOND CHANCES

You'll also be able to restart an event if you fail miserably or destroy your car midway in. This is perhaps one of the most pleasing updates to the original version of the game.

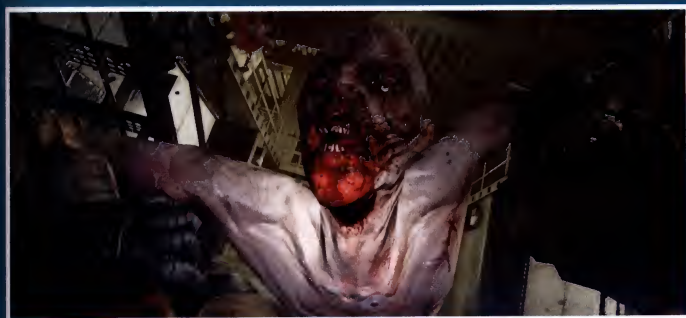
F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN

Scary old ladies crawl out of the screen

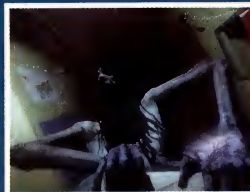
WEBSITE whatisfear.com

WE HAD CONCERNS about *F.E.A.R. 2*, but it turned out to be a lot better than we feared, with big stompy mech bits that reminded us of *SHOGO*.

But if you're still unsold on the merits of Alma-sexing or nailing people to walls using the Penetrator, give this demo a while. Slap the disc into your drive and "feel the *F.E.A.R.*", as faceless marketing slugs say. We suddenly feel sullied by even printing those words. Ah well, can't be helped.



SEXY BEAST



ALMA

Every game has its sex symbol and Alma is the closest you'll get in *F.E.A.R. 2*. Mmm, skeletal...



STOMPY MECHS

The game isn't that difficult, so to don a suit of mechanical armour is unfair on your enemies.

8-BIT IS ENOUGH

Strong Bad kicks retro buttocks

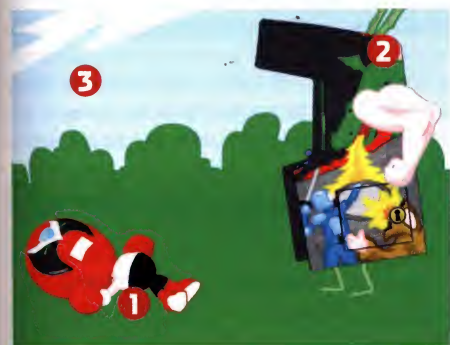
WEBSITE telltalegames.com

JUST LIKE IN *Reality 2.0* in the second *Sam & Max* series, Strong Bad has been given the retro treatment.

Trogdor the Burninator has escaped his videogame confines and is terrorising the land, letting loose a glut of 8-bit sprites on an unsuspecting public. So when the land of Strong Badia is

touched by the evil, Strong Bad himself must act or he might just die laughing.

This is the last episode in the current series of Strong Bad's adventures, but we're thinking it won't be long before Telltale are taking us back into this little Mexican wrestler/boxer's weird and wonderful land.



1 STRONG BAD

Our hero. By the looks of things, he isn't being terribly heroic at the moment.

2 ARCADE

I'd make a joke about a one-armed bandit here, but I don't think it's appropriate.

3 BACKGROUND

Perhaps we could have chosen a more exciting screenshot. We didn't, so we're having to point out the sky. Pretty, isn't it?

LET'S GET EGA!

Burninatin' and transpirin'



TROGDOR

The dragon with the '80s action arm is burning up the country. Can Strong Bad stop him from killifying Strong Badia?



RETRONESS

To defeat him, Strong Bad needs to embrace the cult of 8-bit graphics, using his 'mans' to finally stop the beast.

BEST OF THE REST



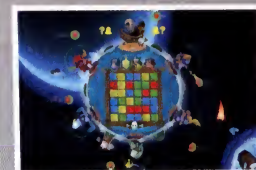
What is on the pages opposite is not the whole of our cover disc's content. Here are the other demos and movies that you can enjoy. Or not, if that's your will.



PUZZLE QUEST: GALACTRIX

WEBSITE puzzle-quest.com/galactrix

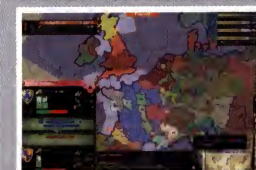
It might only be a *Bejeweled*-style puzzle game (as you can gather from the title), but *PQ* has enough to differentiate it from PopCap's title to be worth another go. Get it here!



PUZZLEGEDDON

WEBSITE puzzlelegeddon.com

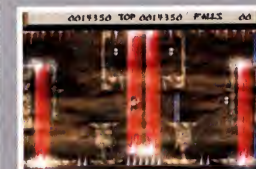
An "inventive mix of puzzle, action and strategy", or so its blurb goes. We liked it and we'd like to think you will too. Simplistic, yet not simple, this should set you up for a while.



TERRA NOVA

WEBSITE moddb.com/mods/terra-nova-mod

A comprehensive mod is just what *Europa Universalis III* fans would want. Though to be fair a game like this, no other type of mod could really have worked.



ULTIMATE BRUCE LEE

WEBSITE retroremakes.com

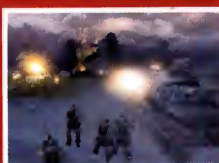
Some older gamers long for the time when sprites were a handful of pixels and your main worry was whether you could make it to the next screen.

Ultimate Bruce Lee sates those desires.

HOT DOWNLOADS
PCZONE

MEN OF WAR DEMO

snipurl.com/mowdemo



If you don't remember *Soldiers: Heroes of World War II*, invest some of your time and energies in this demo of *Men of War*, the latest in the strategic *Soldiers* series.

BETANDRACE

snipurl.com/betandrace



This almost-free-to-play racing game has real locations from real cities to drive about in, and is crisp for a free online title. And you may win money if you're good.

Freeware

David Brown sees what he can get for nowt



PCZONE

ON THE DVD

Freeware is so good at bringing you free games, so utterly fantastic at doing that which its namesake describes, that other publications' freeware sections are ashamed to even be sold in the same newsagents. This month, stomp around cities and knock down buildings, take on the mantle of a dead kung-fu star and beat up bad guys, have an Arabian adventure direct from the '90s, and find your way around in the dark.



ULTIMATE BRUCE LEE

DEVELOPER Trevor Storey and Stuart Collier
WEBSITE snipurl.com/ultimatebrucelee

AH, TO BE young again. *Ultimate Bruce Lee* brings back a lot of memories of going round to a friend's house to play on their Commodore 64 (I only had a Spectrum back then) to play games with decent colours on the screen. Well, they were decent in comparison to the old Speccy. Anyway, one of those games was *Bruce Lee*, a screen-by-screen beat-'em-up with a tiny rendition of everyone's favourite one inch-puncher beating up ninja, killing green blobby sumo wrestlers (were they sumo wrestlers? I have no idea) and the like.

Trevor Storey and Stuart Collier have decided to let us grizzled gamers relive our past with this glorious remake of the old C64 classic, with lovely new backgrounds and decent animations and sprites. Lay your fingers on those cursor keys if you want to move Bruce around, while Z launches an attack. That's it, barring collecting lanterns to reveal a secret area. Now, remakes of *JK+* and *Way of the Exploding Fist* next, please!



WALKIE TONKY

Go on, trash a city why don't you?

DEVELOPER Pieces Interactive WEBSITE piecesinteractive.se/walkietonky

IN ZONE'S LAND of free games, we encounter lots of oddball titles. Some are good, some average and some mind-bogglingly terrible in their cack-handed execution. Fortunately, *Walkie Tonky* stomps into the first category, although it isn't without a couple of niggles.

Basically, you're cast in the role of a gargantuan robot with long spindly legs, comic Mickey Mouse gloves, and a Bender-style rounded robot head (with customary phallic antenna). Your job (kind of like Bender's) is to make humanity suffer, destroying their cities, killing their people and just generally spreading perturbation and despair across the globe.

To do this, you can use your spindly legs to kick down structures or stomp on

ground level objects. Your arms can be used for picking up debris or other objects and hurling them at air-based entities or taller structures. All of this is played out over an engagingly lavish visual backdrop, with satisfying audio to boot.

As you go about spreading your wave of destruction, the humans won't be relaxing and watching the carnage. They'll be doing their utmost to knock you down and prevent you from fulfilling your robotic destiny. As they send rockets and other things to stop you, you can defend yourself by grabbing them out of mid-air and throwing them back from whence they came, if you're nimble enough with the controls.

This is all good fun and you're certain to have a ball when playing *Walkie Tonky*

for the first time. However, and let's remember this isn't a finished product, the questions of repetition and novelty value rear their relatively ugly heads. We're always more forgiving of these things in an independent release, but *Walkie Tonky* is definitely afflicted by it more than you might imagine.

While destroying the environment is great fun, it does tend to grind a bit the further you go. It is also relatively easy to remain upright and defend yourself against attack, so the one-more-go challenge factor isn't readily forthcoming.

Nevertheless, *Walkie Tonky* shows a hell of a lot of potential for a beta-stage freeware project. With a bit more variety and an extra lick of paint, this could become one of your favourite desktop time-wasters.



It is my duty to protect this city against monsters that approach it.

"I'm no monster, I'm an Arabian Knight."

QUEST FOR GLORY II: TRIAL BY FIRE

Arabian fights in Arabian Nights

DEVELOPER AGD Interactive WEBSITE agdinteractive.com

FOLLOWING ON FROM last issue's interview with the guys behind *Broken Sword 2.5*, we came across this little number, a faithful remake of (sadly defunct) Sierra's second *Quest for Glory* game. AGD Interactive have made a habit of turning Sierra's old parser-based adventures into VGA glories, doing *King's Quest 1* and *2* over six years ago. They're back with another remake in tow, this time of the

second *Quest for Glory* game, a series that might not be familiar to many of you.

Quest for Glory was one of Sierra's stalwart titles in the '80s and early '90s, utilising the same adventure game mechanics as their other *Quest* games (*Space Quest*, *King's Quest*) but adding a layer of role-playing onto that wholesome core. Players could choose between three traditional types of



character – fighter, mage, thief – with extra abilities available to customise your choice. Each *Quest for Glory* game was set in a different fantasy setting, with this second game being based primarily on the *Arabian Nights*.

AGD have tried to fix problems with the original game, while striving to remain faithful to its concepts. For example, certain puzzles could only be completed at certain times on certain days, leading many players to get stuck in an unwinnable situation. AGD have eliminated this as much as possible, so it shouldn't be as arduous a task playing this remake as it was the original.

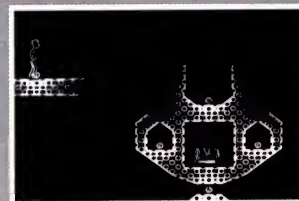
There's also a rudimentary combat system to go alongside the RPG elements, which *Quest for Glory* was famous for back in the day.

What AGD's efforts signal is the potential for remaking classic adventure games in this way. The possibilities are exciting to old school adventure fans, especially if some of the text-based ones that captured our hearts, like *Space Quest II* and *III*, are adapted. We can but hope that other devs follow AGD's lead and go down the remake path.



May you die a death of a thousand swords.

WEBGAME OF THE MONTH



CLOSURE

DEVELOPER Tyler Glaiel and Jon Schubbe

WEBSITE snipurl.com/closuregame

IF STARBREEZE HADN'T taken the name *The Darkness*, this plucky Flash number might have used that name. You see, the entire gaming area is pitch black, with only your character producing light from the glowing orbs he carries.

The game's object is to make your way across the screen, using said orbs to guide you through the blackness. The gameplay itself is a mixture of 2D platformer and puzzle game, where you try to work out how to progress before your light source burns out and you're stranded in the dark. There are 30 levels to traverse, so it'll probably take you a while to plough through the game.

There's plenty of fun to be had, if you don't listen to the caterwauling of *The Darkness* while playing.

That would be an error of titanic proportions.

Extend



David Brown checks out the hottest mods, maps and add-ons



EUROPE IN RUINS

Warfare on an eternal battleground

WEBSITE europeinruins.com MOD FOR *Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts*

YOU'D THINK EUROPE had already been bashed about enough by the explosive action of *Company of Heroes*, but some people think it wasn't wrecked enough. These people have decided to make a mod for *Opposing Fronts* that can only be described as highly ambitious.

Essentially, the team behind *Europe in Ruins* are turning *COH* into an MMORTS, featuring both a persistent world and an ongoing online war. This means you'll need to create an account at the mod's website before you get involved. So if you're one of those people that doesn't like creating new profiles, accounts and logging in to things, you might want to steer clear.

However, this is a small price to pay for a potentially superb addition to *COH*

and one that is hugely ambitious in what it's trying to do. Suffice to say that not even proper studios have managed to create a good MMORTS (only a few have even tried), so for a modding team to attempt it is bordering on the foolhardy. But we embrace foolhardiness here at PC.ZONE.

When you create a profile, you pick whether to fight for the Axis or Allies, before selecting some initial abilities. After this, you get three companies assigned to your command, which you can customise and build yourself, dividing them into platoons to configure your fighting force for battles.

Once a battle has been resolved, statistics from the conflict are sent to the mod team's server, where the effect on the overall tide of battle

is determined – details such as how many men were lost, what experience was gained, and how many territories each faction holds afterwards.

The modders want to reward people who put in the effort to play, so cheaper upgrades and special abilities become available the more often you log in and

fight. There is balancing going on, so it isn't just about how much you play.

As you can imagine, *Europe in Ruins* isn't swarming with players at the moment, but the potential for something great is there. Who knows, this could be the turning point for MMORTS games right here.

"This could be the turning point for MMORTS games"



TERRA NOVA

Hardcore strategy just got harder

WEBSITE moddb.com/mods/terra-nova-mod MOD FOR *Europa Universalis III*

ONE THING YOU can guarantee in the world of hardcore historical strategy games is that no matter how much effort a developer puts in to making things authentic, some people are never satisfied.

This is the case for this mod for *Europa Universalis III* – a game already steeped in as much history a layman could imagine. The goal of this mod wasn't just to ramp up the realism, but to tweak the AI and improve various other aspects of the game the modders thought needed some tinkering with.

Additional events, decisions and missions have been added, with a focus on plausibility and realism throughout. Another thing they wanted to do, to quote the mod's FAQ, was to "reduce the annoyance of the player while playing *EUIII* as much as possible".

As with most realism mods, you might think they've gone too far, but it's nice to know it's there if you want it. The modders claim 90% of the vanilla game has been modified in *Terra Nova*, which, considering the scope of the original, is an ambitious undertaking.



The definitive *Europa* mod?

7 DEADLY SINS

Luke Skywalker not included

WEBSITE moddb.com/mods/7-deadly-sins MOD FOR *Sins of a Solar Empire*

FOLLOWING ON FROM last month's *Sacrifice of Angels 2* – a *Star Trek* mod for *Sins of the Solar Empire* – we have *7 Deadly Sins*. As with *Sacrifice* this mod gives players more factions.

In *7DS* you get a selection of new planets; 11 races; some new weapon effects; a new class of ships; planet and galaxy textures; new stars and even a black hole. The new races are probably of most interest to you all and the mod team has done its best to give you what

you desire. The original three races are still present, plus three variants, in addition to Atlantians; the Rogue (playable pirates); the Arilou and Kor-Ah (two races from the *Star Control* series); and the Empire from *Star Wars*.

The gameplay itself is the same as the vanilla *Sins*, and work is still ongoing on improving the new factions and graphical features. We're hoping they'll add *Wing Commander's* Kilrathi or races from *Babylon 5* at some point.



VIKING INVASION II

Neither Eric nor Vicky are leading these troops

WEBSITE moddb.com/mods/viking-invasion-ii MOD FOR *Rome: Total War*

WHEN DOING A *Total War* mod you should make sure you do it well and do it to a certain scale. This is what the team behind the *Viking Invasion II* mod for *Rome: Total War* have done.

This mod essentially recreates the classic *Viking Invasion* expansion for the first *Medieval: Total War* game, just taking out some of the naff bits and inserting some golden chunks of hairy Viking goodness.

Packed into the mod are over 50 provinces to fight over; eight factions consisting of Saxons, Vikings and Celts; a host of new resources; units fine-tuned for increased historical accuracy; and other such things. In fact, there's so much going on in this mod, it's impossible to

cover it adequately here. So our advice would be to just download the thing and lop off some Saxon heads post haste. Or you could visit the mod's page at Mod DB and see what all the fuss is about there.

Here's to this mod going forward into the *Medieval II* or even *Empire* engines in the future. Huzzah!



Some fearsome Vikings.



Online Zone

What's new in *PC ZONE's* forum, Fight Club and Zone Chat

Things have been a bit quiet in the land of Online this month, what with non-digital activities and shenanigans getting in the way. Fear not though, we did manage to get some stuff done, even if this month's offerings were perhaps a bit too meagre for our liking. Still, we can but soldier on, providing occasional glimpses into our strange lives in Zone Chat and showing how insanely bad we are at games in Fight Club.

PCZONE 2009 ON THE BLOG



Join us on Twitter!

DOESN'T THE TANK just look right with his minigun poised and ready to fire? No, that's not a euphemism, we're referring to the hilarious mock-up of *Team4tress*, what *Team Fortress 2* might look like if the characters from *Left 4 Dead* were superimposed onto that game. The Witch as a Spy? Louis as the Demoman? You never know, it could work.

Elsewhere in blog land, we've been talking about that Twitter thing. Apparently, quintessential brainbox Stephen Fry is on there, so if it is good enough for him, it is good enough for us.

So we're now aboard the Twitter train. Sign up and follow what we're doing, how we're doing it and see Steve talk about salmon slapping bears in the face. It just brings us all together in a warm, collective whole.

So if you want to Twitter us, get onto pczone.co.uk, where you will find us all lurking in link form, or visit us directly at twitter.com/pczone.

NOTES FROM THE FORUM

Do you follow strangers around and wonder what they look like naked?

Recently I have been having this feeling that the internet has been turning me into a stalker. I read people's blogs, look at their forums and inspect their Steam accounts. I know people put these things up here so others will look at them and that privacy is dead, but I'm still getting the feeling of invading peoples' privacy. I'm now a fan of NOObTube because of this behaviour.

TheStalkingHead

I used to do that. Don't really have the time these days though.

DR_DARK

When people use the word "stalking" they're usually describing a decent level of "unwanted attention". Most people who write their own blogs and fill out their profiles with superfluous detail do so because they are attention whores.

The maths has come out on your side, young master StalkingHead.

SunScramble

But don't you think it's weird that, with a little effort, I could find out what you look like, your phone number, where you live, your job and a picture of your mum?

TheStalkingHead



The forumites enjoy a jam.



I presume you mean noobtoob.com, and found it through me.

Apophis_DD

Yes, I did mean noobtoob.com and I got it through your Steam account.

Now tell me, does it feel like I have invaded your privacy, or did you put it on there just in case somebody looked at your profile, and that way you could advertise it because you are a fan?

TheStalkingHead

Yes, my privacy does feel invaded. Though I'm far from being what I'd call a fan, it being more of a place to torment kids.

Apophis_DD

Damn, I was right. I am kind of a stalker. I haven't been on their forums, but I like to hear news about games, so I watch the



YouTube vids, although seeing as it is all about new games as soon as they come out, it's generally about console games.

And I don't have any paid-for channels on my TV, so it is the only game program I can watch.

TheStalkingHead

Ach, blogs, profiles, personal forums... Couldn't care less.

Cho-Konnit

Do you creep around, listening for the tell-tale ticking of your giger counter?

Do you get a tingle at the thought of finding a hidden stash?

Are you always on the lookout for the next half invisible anomaly?

Are you hunting for the Strellok?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you may be a stalker...

G_Man_007

"Get out of here, stalker!"

Wardrobe

FIGHT CLUB



COME AND TAKE ON THE ZONE STAFF IN OUR MONTHLY ONLINE GAMING FREE-FOR-ALL!

Brains, blood and a bit of blasphemy

WELL, WE SAID it would be different and it was. It just wasn't as different as it could have been. Fret ye not, much fun was had by all who entered the *Left 4 Dead* Fight Club this month.

One guy even admitted to being a *PC Gamer* reader, but he was swiftly smoked, hunted, vomited on and then beaten wafer-thin by a passing Tank. He was even shot by his own teammates while lying helpless on the floor. That's what you get when you admit to that sort of heresy.

Anyway, it was an extremely tense and close fight, with tempers flaring after David deliberately set off the car alarm on the first level of *No Mercy*. Team play? We're having none of it. Steve was subjected to repeated attacks from loyal readers, who viciously exclaimed "Get Hogarty! He's mine!" amid other disgracefully antagonistic taunts and jibes.

To be fair, it was usually Killer Fox who carked it first, displaying a level of ineptitude that was much appreciated by the Infected team, although, as you



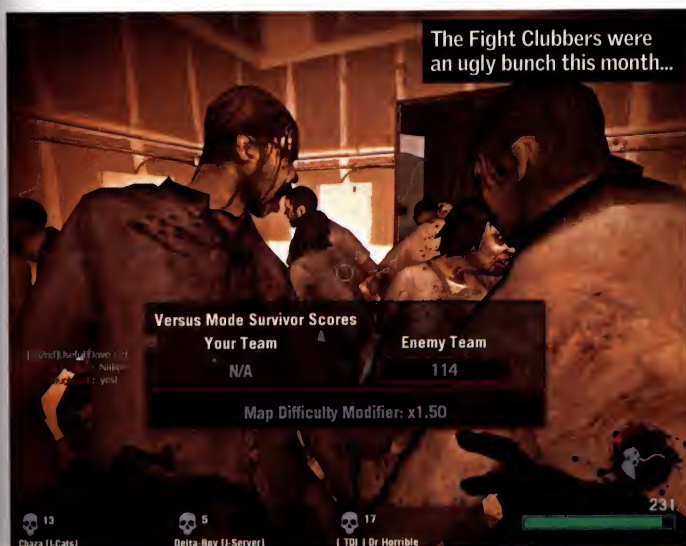
Steve gets stuck in.

can imagine, not by his teammates screaming at him to get in the lift.

Steve also had a chance to get his revenge on his detractors by spawning as a Tank on the hospital level, and proceeding to batter almost the entire enemy side with a series of ruthless beatdowns and tactical play.

Finally eliminated by some sneaky sniping by David, Steve's Infected followers prevented any further progress by taking out the lone survivor.

All was set for a decider in the finale with both teams united in their inability to finish any of the levels, but then the server crashed. Damn you and your dodgy servers, Valve!



The Fight Clubbers were an ugly bunch this month...

CAN'T MAKE FIGHT CLUB?

If you find yourself unable to make it to Fight Club – perhaps you've decided to join a paramilitary organisation in Paraguay – then feel free to join other readers on the following public servers. We might even join the rabble from time to time, you never know.

WHO'S WHO

Jon Blyth [PCZ]log
Phil Wand [PCZ]peoplesfrontofjudea
Steve Hogarty [PCZ]misterbrilliant
Will Porter [PCZ]batsphinx
David Brown [PCZ]plughead

1 COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE
cs.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs.zonegames.co.uk:27025

2 HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065

3 DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE
dod.zonegames.co.uk:27085

4 TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC
tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045

5 ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS
pczone2.jolt.co.uk

6 BATTLEFIELD 2142
bf2142.zonegames.co.uk:
16567

7 TEAM FORTRESS 2
pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27115
pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27125
pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27135

ZONE CHAT



Beaten with a wrench



DO SURVIVAL HORROR games exclude themselves from multiplayer gaming? Does a game that tries to build up tension lose that when a second player is introduced? That and many other subjects were discussed in an intellectually stimulating Zone Chat this month.

The general consensus is that there's no fear when others get involved, as the sense of isolation that games like *System Shock 2* bring to the table is lost when you aren't alone. The chatters also vented their anger about *Dead Space* being ported to the Wii, laughing at how rubbish it'll be.

There were also a few nodded heads about the issue of wrenches in games and which game implemented them the best. This led, perhaps inevitably, to the Scout update for *Team Fortress 2*, which features a bat that can stun opposition players even when they are invulnerable.

Fenwurz then changed tack by suggesting we do

Peggle in next month's Fight Club, which would be fantastic.

Finally, in a parting flourish, the PlayStation 3 was denounced by Sarevok for being a "seriously bad investment", whereby we took our leave and the chatters seemed to be starting to argue about the merits and flaws of *LittleBigPlanet*.

How to join in!

To be a part of next month's ZONE Chat, join our Steam Community group: **PC ZONE (PCZ)**. If you don't have Steam, first be ashamed of yourself, and then download it from steampowered.com. Keep an eye out for announcements in that there Steam group for the date of the next chat event...



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Retrozone

Facing the wrong way since 1995...

Flashback

DUNGEON KEEPER



FOR THOSE OF those you who've slugged hours into *Red Alert 3*, and consider it the pinnacle of modern strategy games, I say this: up yours. *Dungeon Keeper* and *Dungeon Keeper 2* were the pinnacle of original strategy development. You bossed a bunch of creatures around who would mostly follow your orders, be it your mindless, ever-working imps, or the creatures that you lured into your dungeon by creating fun and addictive things for them to do.

Said creatures would protect your gold mines and the heart of your dungeon from destruction by heroic types in return for sanctuary. The innovation mostly came from you lacking any immediate control over your forces beyond making them happy,

combining the usual RTS resource hunting with a degree of creature-comforting and micromanagement.

Both games were rather pretty – *Dungeon Keeper 2* in a more classical way because of its crisp, 3D graphics, but *Dungeon Keeper* was made by Bullfrog's excellent art team. The games' challenge became protecting your base while attracting bigger and badder creatures – including Horny, the most destructive (and irritable) demon around. This horned beast would walk through your dungeon, killing other creatures and imps, or sometimes just sitting in the corner and pouting. The upshot of having him around was that he'd happily wade into battle, and leave a pile of rotting corpses behind him.

Dungeon Keeper and *Dungeon Keeper 2* were both beautiful, addictive and humorous games. It's a big shame that most of Bullfrog have dispersed into the ether, as we'll never see anything like it – apart from the brilliant *Evil Genius*, but that didn't sell enough copies to earn itself a sequel. You disgust us, modern PC gamers who don't read this magazine.



Got something on your fang, mate.

But how? Get Horny on your PC

If you already have a copy of *Dungeon Keeper*, it'll take a quick download of *DOSBox* onto your PC to install and play the original. *Dungeon Keeper 2* is a Windows-based game, so you shouldn't have any trouble installing it. It's actually cheaper to buy *Dungeon Keeper 2* than *Dungeon Keeper* from eBayers or Amazon resellers. You can, of course, search for them both on Abandonware sites, but

that's sort-of illegal and we deplore any man, woman or child caught using them.

dosbox.com

The download page of good old *DOSBox*.

www.thehouseofgames.net

You can read more about the game here. And do other things, but because we're so honest we're not going to say what.



It shouldn't be comfy, but it is.

Dungeon Creeper Six of the baddest monsters from Dungeon Keeper



1 THE HORNED REAPER
Liable to hissy fits, but there's none better in the heat of battle.



2 BILE DEMONS
These hard-hitters crush their enemies with their gigantic, red-tinted bingo wings.



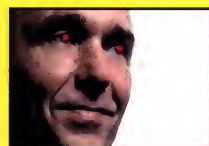
3 IMPs
These guys destroy walls, creating more space for your lair, and harvest gold for you.



4 WARLOCKS
These guys can shred the average hero to pieces at long range. At short range, they tend to die.



5 WALLS
Walls are the games' most horrifying creatures. They surround you and block your path to success.



6 PETER MOLYNEUX
Molyneux promises the world, and then delivers fun, but uninspired, games.

Now & Then

WOLFENSTEIN vs WOLFENSTEIN 3D



Bad day to forget how to shoot.

WOLFENSTEIN 3D WAS probably one of the more controversial titles ever released, with robotic Hitlers, gigantic Nazi emblems and made-up German. And it was the game that established the FPS genre and secured id's fortunes. And it's the opposite of what the new *Wolfenstein* is – a quiet, expected and dull return to the industry of a name that we all used to love.

While *Wolfenstein 3D* was a game that had you running through corridors gunning down Nazis, *Wolfenstein* has you teleporting through dimensions and killing weird little alien dogs. Also, the original had a great sense of humour, which it's violently apparent that the new one doesn't. Shake your heads, readers, and vote with your wallets. Or don't, because the new one might be good.



Play it! Get B.J. Blazkowicz working again...

- 1 Dig about on the internet for MS-DOS 6.22 installation disks. Then dig about in your attic for the 3.5in cover disk from ZONE's early days that held *Wolfenstein 3D*'s demo.
- 2 Use your MS-DOS disks to partition and reformat your computer's hard drive, turning your vast 200GB storage device into a piddling 20MB job.
- 3 Bash your head against a wall in frustration at having to create a new boot disk by typing out new autoexec.bat and config.sys files, to get the damn game working.
- 4 Give up with the arcane nature of MS-DOS, reformat your PC, and reinstall Windows. Then install Steam and buy a copy of *Wolfenstein 3D* from Valve for £3.

MAMEframe

CAPTAIN COMMANDO

I HAVE TWO very fond memories of playing *Captain Commando*. The first was at the age of 12, rocking through most of the game in a horrible pier arcade on the West Coast of Wales (not that there are any pleasant arcades on piers). The other was buying the game itself to plug into my arcade machine at home, turning it on, and forgetting the machine was still powered when I readjusted the position of the board inside the machine, giving myself a rather large electric shock myself in the process.

The game itself was like *Final Fight*, but designed by complete nutcases. You played as such characters as the Captain himself, or this weird baby that rode a robot suit around using tiny little switches. It was one of the more impressive (and weird) Capcom fighters, and is hard to find these days.

The Captain did turn up in one of the Marvel vs Capcom games though, to about as much fanfare as the average poo.



A shaved mummy is released in a museum.



Samurai bundle!

What is MAME?

The Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator currently emulates over 3,500 games. You can get it from mame.net – use *Mame32* for a nice front-end. Then you can download *Robby Roto*, which is legal. You can play all the others too, but not legally. So stop it.

Back in the day



CARMAGEDDON 2

By Ed Zitron

"RUN. LIVE TO fly. Fly to live. Do or die." Those lyrics didn't make sense then, and don't make sense now, but when I first played *Carmageddon 2* around 11 years ago, I was in awe of the game and its Iron Maiden-laden soundtrack.

Not only was the game beautiful for the time, but it was visceral, fast-paced fun. *Carmageddon 2* required me to ram – at speed – into other cars, not just knocking them off the road but killing them.

Even the boss battles were epic: huge killdozers would lumber at you, and if you caught them at the wrong angle, you were crushed into a bloody mess by their tires.

I had to construct intricate jumps and spins to take down the first of them – the Dumptruck – but in the end managed to kill him by driving in a straight line at speed. How boring.

CURRENT OBSESSIONS

ON THE PCZ HARD DRIVE

The games we're playing, and why we're playing them



MIRROR'S EDGE

Sprinting scared: **Adam Glick**

HORROR IS A personal thing. For some *BioShock*'s syringe-wielding Little Sisters cause shudders. To others *Dead Space*'s attacking when sliced-and-diced mutants cause their bile to churn. Meanwhile gamers old enough to remember SHODAN shudder at the sound of a stuttering contralto. But the game that terrifies me is *Mirror's Edge*.

Really, this game shouldn't generate any sort of dread: its City is antiseptically clean and blindingly shiny; the gameplay is practically gore-free; and the trance

soundtrack is unable to cause tension. Yet if I play this game for more than a minute, my sweaty palms cause my hands to slip off my controller, and my heart tries to pound out of my ribcage.

Really, I shouldn't be surprised by these affects – you see, I'm acrophobic.

VERTIGIOUS

I can't use a stepladder, let alone stand on a chair, without quaking. Occasionally I've woken screaming, due to dreams that I'm falling off a skyscraper.

Yet in *Mirror's Edge* I take on the role of Faith, who uses parkour to bound across rooftops.

Now thanks to DICE, I've spent the last few days watching skyscraper windows flash before my eyes as I slip from a ledge, and listening to all-too-realistic sounds of bones crunching and flesh splattering as Faith strikes concrete.

This game plays out my nightmares in front of my eyes. Worse – it's forcing me to take part in my nightmares.

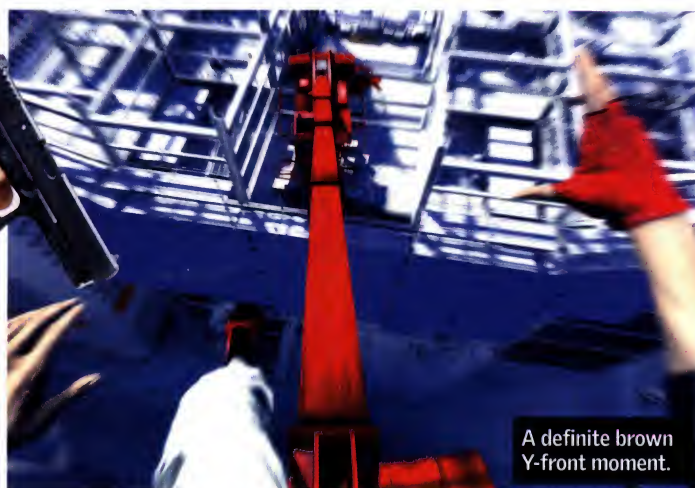
Stopping playing should be the sensible thing to do, but it appears there's something positive about this experience. I'm roughly halfway through the game, but now my palms are distinctly less sweaty, my breathing is less laboured, and my shivering is reduced when I play. In short, the more I play *Mirror's Edge*, the more my phobia seems to be fading.

I doubt you'll ever see me tracing along London's rooftops, but Faith's suffering could mean that stepladders won't terrify me any more.

VERDICT Perfect therapy



Seeing this Adam fainted.



A definite brown Y-front moment.

Faith – courier and therapist.

F.E.A.R.

High-Kicking: **Nick Brakespear**

F.E.A.R. IS OFTEN criticised for its minimalist, monochrome environments, but in the face of *F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin*'s release, I decided to slide-kick my way through those old grey corridors once again.

While the graphics have aged somewhat, the visual style remains as

effective as it ever was. The corridors don't confuse or disorientate, and the act of dashing around a corner to shoot one soldier and scissor-kick another is far simpler than physics might dictate. There's a clarity to the proceedings and a flow to the gameplay that I can't help but feel Monolith have lost in the sequel.

As for the creepy Alma bits, as I have confessed before, I never considered *F.E.A.R.* to be scary. A creepy game to be sure, but never truly scary. To be told that you are a bullet-dodging face-kicking badass, and then to be expected to shit yourself at the sight of a little girl, always seemed a bit odd to me.

That being said, the game is still very disturbing, with its seamless integration of reality-warping nightmare sequences keeping you slightly off balance. Unfortunately, Norton Mapes is still a twat.

VERDICT Kicking is fun



Did that guy's arse really explode?



DIY Rescue has a new spin.

Big man, big gun, short life expectancy.

STALKER: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL

Shooting while perplexed: **Richard Cosgrove**

MY REACTION WAS blunt: "Why the fuck would I want to do that? My bloody arse is getting the shite kicked out of it fucking enough as it is!" The cause of that outburst was David: "There are some mods that make *STALKER*'s combat more realistic. Try them."

For me, the only way *STALKER*'s combat could be more realistic is if armed Russians burst into my flat while I was playing, intent on ensuring I'd need a closed-casket funeral.

For instance, at one point I had to cross a room holding three pistol-armed bandits. An hour later I eventually managed to kill the trio and get to the door, without dying. When I did some bastard jumped out and blasted me, point-blank, with a shotgun.

Now I've been outflanked, assassinated, sniped and blown up countless times by countless bandits, militia, cultists, soldiers, and mercenaries in countless assaults, ambushes, sieges and skirmishes. And I've been eaten by mutated dogs, kicked to death by packs of... somethings, been clawed to death by

packs of somethings with tentacles, and been killed... somehow by... well... crap I have no idea what they were, but they kept killing me.

I don't need more realistic combat in *STALKER*. I'm blissfully happy being murdered every few minutes as it is.

VERDICT Enjoyably punishing

No idea what it is, but it's lethal.



WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

Readers on their chosen poison

JOWOO CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

This game is a strong candidate for least impressive weapon sound effects ever. Guns go "bang" not "paff". Otherwise, a solid and sometimes spectacular game.

CHO-KONNIT DARK SEED II

Some time ago I found a free download for this H.R. Giger point-and-clicker, which is difficult to the point of being pointless. "Hey, why don't you go to the carnival?" everyone hints, but "Carnival isn't open yet," says the sign.

THESTALKINGHEAD UFO: AFTERLIGHT

I've always been a fan of the *UFO* games and this is one of the better modern ones.

Tell us what's on your hard drive in the forums at pczone.co.uk

DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

FOOTBALL MANAGER LIVE

David Brown gets in his tactics truck again and learns about betas, bugs and the end of the (game) world

MILES JACOBSON HAS been the main voice of Sports Interactive for what seems like forever and, thankfully, he's still as passionate as ever about delivering the best football management games money can currently buy.

We managed to drag Jacobson away from his laptop long enough for him to talk to us about what the fans have said about *Football Manager Live*, and how the course of the game's continuing development is very much in the hands of you, the player.



Miles Jacobson, Managing director



01 COMMUNITY ACTION

"The reaction to *FML* has been very positive overall. The response from our main forums, as is always the case, has been along the lines of 'Why are you doing that? Why aren't you spending more time on the regular *FM*?'. Other than that sort of thing, it's been great. We've had an extensive beta testing phase and the response from that has been very good and it's helped shape the game, which is the most important thing.

"When we started the beta phase, the game was very different to how it eventually ended up, and a lot of that has been because of the feedback we've been getting from the beta. It's a luxury to actually be in a beta phase for about 15-16 months before launching, so we were lucky to be in that position.

"There's going to be some people who don't like it, just like there are some people who don't like *Football Manager*. But yeah, we're pretty happy with the response and the take-up so far as well."

02 MARKET FORCES

"I think we're trying to go for a more casual player, although I don't particularly like those terms 'hardcore' and 'casual', because what is a hardcore gamer nowadays? Is it defined by how many hours you playing? But I think we're going to have a pretty good mix. If it's based on hours played, we have some people who are in the game worlds 12 to 16 hours a day, and we've got others who are logging in every couple of days for an hour. They're still doing just as well as those players who sign in for ages, so while we do have a skills system that is similar to a levelling system in other MMOs, you don't have to be online to get the skills. You have to remember to get online to change your skills once they've been completed, of course.

"We wanted to get away from the MMOs that had gold farming and things like that, and a lot of the features that have been added into the game, and will continue to be added every few months, will be aimed at levelling the playing field as much as possible, so that everyone can enjoy the game. If you have one person who is dominating and everybody else is falling behind, it's not really fun for those other 999 people in the game world."

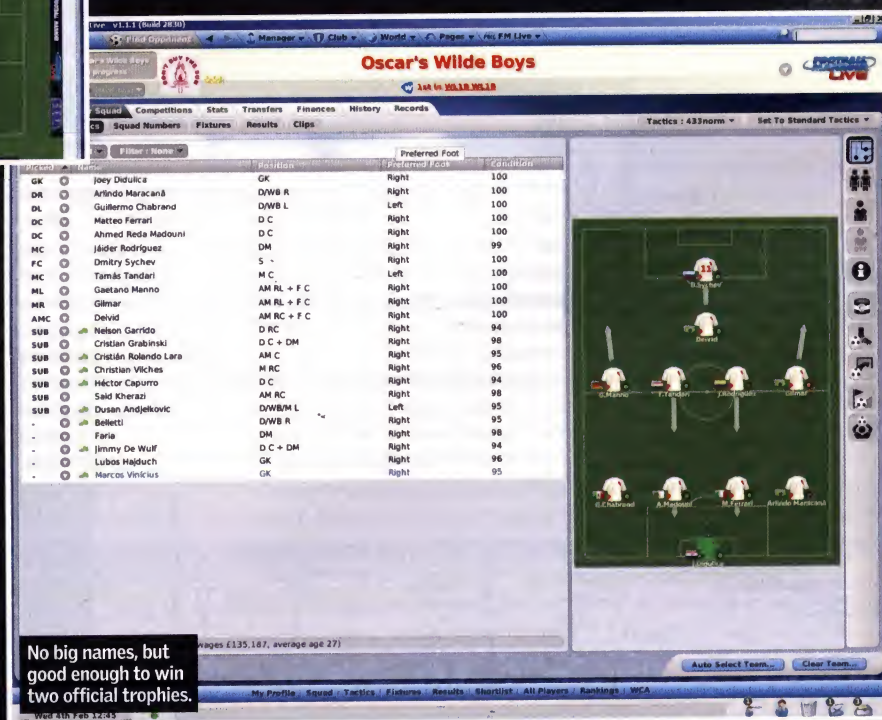




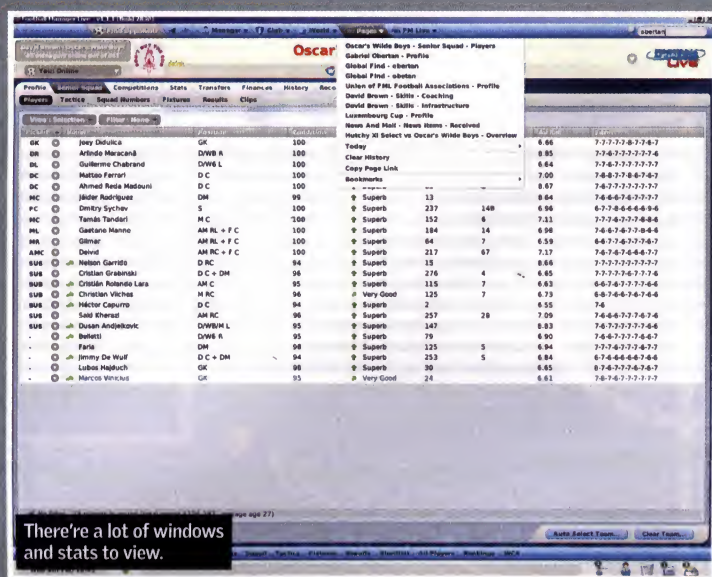
"Letting people choose what kind of manager they want to be is an important part of the experience"

03 OPEN WORLD

"We tried to keep FML open-ended in the way someone might want to play the game. We don't tell them that they have to have a first-team squad, a reserve team squad and a youth team squad. There are some people out there who will happily play it with just youth players, because they're looking at it very long term, because once they've beefed up these youth players, they'll have a great team. They don't really care about these first few seasons, whereas there are others that, literally as soon as they have the cash, are trying to sign world superstars. So there's no set style of play, and again, letting people choose what kind of manager or what kind of owner of a club they want to be is an important part of the social experience."



No big names, but good enough to win two official trophies.



04 TIDYING UP

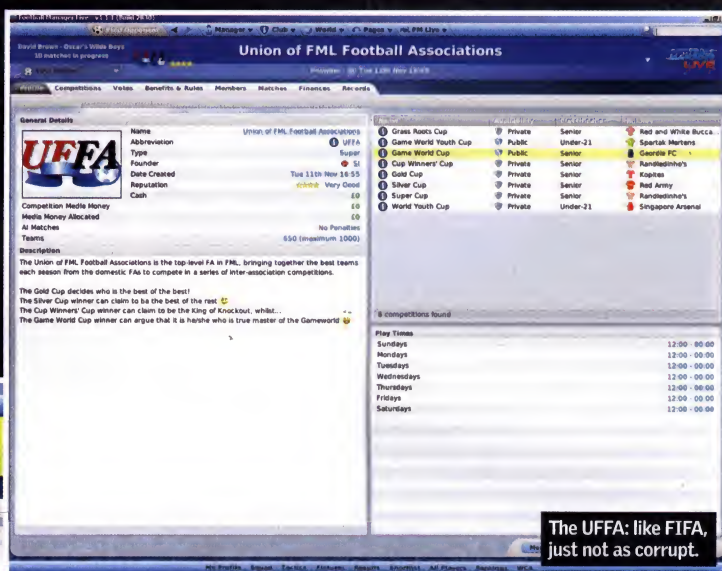
"Some people have said the interface is a bit too cluttered, and that they ignore most of the options. My advice would be that you don't necessarily have to bother with those options. It's like when I buy a TV, I'd rather buy a high-end model with loads of buttons on it which I've no clue what they do, simply because at some point I might want to use them."

"We've tried to simplify the interface over the original beta's, and if people wanted to tell us what they didn't like about it, they can of course go on our official forums and tell us there. We'll be listening to the consumers very closely now, just as we did throughout the beta. If people think there's too much stuff then maybe there needs to be an option to turn off some of it. They just need to tell us."

"We'll be listening closely now, just as we did in the beta"

05 HIDDEN GEMS

"The database is the same one that's in the main *Football Manager* game, so if you're looking at players like Hatem Ben Arfa, Samir Nasri who's at Arsenal now, Gabriel Obertan who's a particular favourite of mine, there's a Mexican goalkeeper called Sergio Arias who's very good in the game. You know, there are special players out there, as there are in real life. The thing to do is to build up your scouting stats, because a lot of those kinds of players will be unavailable to you until you can scout players in that particular country. This means that just because someone has a great knowledge of our database, or has cheated and used the data editor, doesn't mean he's going to be able to buy those players in *FML*."



06 END OF DAYS

"One of our development team managed to delete one of the beta worlds by pressing the wrong button. It's those kinds of things that helped us learn lessons, so we began treating the beta worlds with exactly the same care and attention as we do the live worlds now. But this was something that could never have happened in the live world, thankfully!"

"There's been a bit of ribbing in the office when one person's team has been doing badly, but as a team, we're normal really... and when we cock things up we tend to tell people. I mean, it's known by our beta testers that we deleted the game world. They know exactly what happened, because we told them what happened. Of course they would have noticed it had gone anyway, but with something like that, it's very easy to paper over the cracks and say the server crashed, but no, one of our guys deleted the bloody game world!"

ENGINE ROLLING

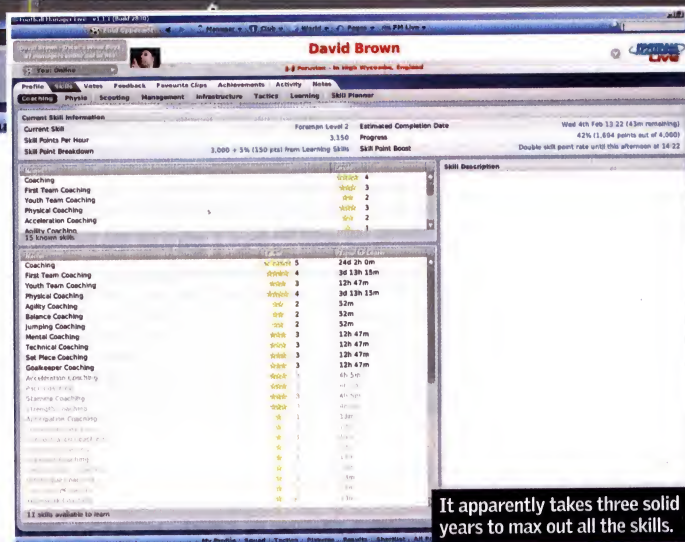
We use the 2D match view in *FML* rather than the 3D match view, but it's the same match engine. It's one area of the code that is shared between *FM* and *FML*. We'd love to use the 3D one eventually, and part of the reason we have this constant development is that we can make these decisions and release things when they're ready to go.

"Investigations are going on as to the impact the 3D match engine would have on both the client and the server side of things. Also, there's the question of one person playing in 2D and another in 3D, whether that would affect the game synchronisation. There are a few technical challenges there, but in the long run, we definitely want to move to 3D."

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GOAL FOR OSCAR'S WILDE BOYS!!



"I think we'll be seeing a lot of expansion in the skills area of the game, but another thing we've been talking to beta players about is perhaps having the ability for various managers to clan up, so for example you might have one player who's a specialist in scouting and one who's great at coaching helping each other out. What you would do is search for a specialist manager whose got all the scouting skills, who you could then pay to use their services in that area, so they would get money for being good at something specific.

"We've got hundreds of ideas and there are loads more on the forums, but I could say something now and it might not happen for two, three or four years, so we're going to see what happens with the latest additions, like the stadiums, before we talk about other new things. If lots of people wanted us to add something, we'll consider it and again, they'd just need to go on our forums and suggest it."

Another team crumbles before the might of the Wilde Boys.



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THE GAMING GUIDE TO GOOD GAMES AND GOOD PARENTING

A parent's guide to the
"computer-games"



TODAY'S "COMPUTER-GAMES" come in many shapes and sizes, from the popular "Playstation 3" game to the games that exist on your Desktop PC. While they may be fun to play, computer-games are fraught with hidden dangers! As a parent, it's your job to be sceptical and relentlessly paranoid about new technology. Do you know what your child is doing right now? Quick, run and check! Smash in their door! Shake them until they admit what it is they're doing! Never stop investigating their lives, or else they'll die and it'll be all society's fault!

WATCH OUT - GAMES ARE ABOUT!
Here's just a few of the things you should be looking out for in today's computer games!

! HOMOSEXUALS

• Computer games are rife with homosexuality and effeminate personalities. A 2005 study by The

South Carolina Christian Friends of Jesus Christ showed that exposure to these corrupting influences confounds and misleads impressionable children. As a rule of thumb, avoid games from Japan.

! SPIDERS

• Computer games often feature spiders which will scare your child into a coma. Always check for the spider warning on a box before you allow your child to play a computer game. If you see the spider warning, immediately destroy the computer game because even seeing the spider on the spider warning logo will scare your child.

! OTHER PEOPLE

• Computer games these days allow "other people" to enter into discourse with your child via "Internet". The other people are often broadcast from the TV straight into your child's bedroom, or straight into your child's bed, or straight into your child. Prevent this by placing Sellotape over the infrared hole on your TV.

BE A PRO-PARENT - FOLLOW THESE TIPS!

How to be sure your child isn't wanking over Lara Croft

GET INVOLVED!

Hey! Games aren't just for kids you know! So stand two feet behind your child for hours at a time, observing in absolute silence as they play their favourite game. Remember to keep your finger on the power button at all times, in case the entire screen suddenly fills up with porn.

TAKE A BREAK!

Phew! All those games can be hard work! Every 10 minutes or so you should enforce a fun "break time" of about two hours. Why not bury the power cables during "break time", so that your child has something to dig up later on?

READ THE RATINGS!

Read the ratings! PEGI and the BBFC put a lot of hard work into awarding games with the appropriate age rating, so look out for them! It's usually best to add two or three years on to a game's rating however, just to be safe. You know, in case the BBFC and PEGI missed something.

JUST ASK!

The staff in the games shops are always willing to help! Don't be afraid to ask: "Do you have any games that adhere to my narrow-minded socio-political and religious beliefs, that I might force them on my child?"

! THE DISABLED

• Increasingly the disabled are appearing in computer games, which can lead to distracting questions about why some people need a wheelchair. It's best that your children are shielded from the

fact that everybody is not exactly the same until they're at least 21 years of age, so that they emerge into the real world with a wonderfully maladjusted and prejudiced view of society.

REMEMBER - THE ONLY GOOD GAMING IS SAFE GAMING. IF IN DOUBT, CHUCK IT OUT!



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